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"LOOK," CLAIRE WHISPERED, "FATE HAS CHOSEN FOR ME."

AN UNHOLY MARRIAGE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Gerard Fontaine was brought home dead, all Lillywold was full of sorrow for the gallant gentleman departed, and pity for the widow and children; but when it became known that they were left all but penniless, pity turned to consternation, and sympathy took a practical form. At first it was only a rumour, but when that rumour was confirmed, the bereaved ones were inundated by letters of condolence and offers of help. On the morning of his death, Gerard Fontaine had received a legal looking document which evidently disturbed him greatly, although he would not confide its contents to his wife, saying there was no need to alarm her without a cause. Then he had his horse saddled, and rode over to Weston, the nearest town, to see the family lawyer at his

office. When he left it was noticed by some passers by that his eyes were wild and vacant, and that he walked like a drunken man, until with difficulty he had mounted his horse and clattered away at a furious rate. Whether the animal took fright and threw him; whether he grew faint and fell from his saddle, would always be a matter of conjecture; but an hour later he was found close by his own gates, stone dead. He was buried with all the honours due to him and the race from which he sprang; for no one remembered a time when a Fontaine did not reign at Fontaine Abbey, and Gerard had been amongst the most popular of them all.

After the last sad rites had been performed, it devolved upon Mr. Swainson, the lawyer, to tell the bitter truth to the sorrowing widow and her children.

The story was briefly this; the rightful heir to the Fontaine estates had appeared and demanded his own. He was a young man of American nationality, and claimed to be the grandson of Vincent Fontaine.

Gerard's father was Vincent's younger brother; but as Vincent had mysteriously disappeared

years ago, and no authentic news could be gleaned of him, the younger took possession.

It now transpired that the elder brother in a freak had gone to America, where he contracted a low marriage, and casting in his lot with his wife's people held no further communication with England.

A son was the sole issue of this marriage, and he dying early, left in his turn the young man, Hiram Fontaine, who until quite recently had been wholly ignorant of his aristocratic relatives.

Vincent Fontaine, a very old man, had but lately died, and in his last hours had babbled so much of his family, and the large possessions which were rightfully his, that Hiram attached some importance to them, and having buried him, carefully went through his letters and papers, with the result that he now laid claim to Fontaine Abbey, and it was evident from the first that his claim was good. But he was not content with this, he also demanded the return of the revenues of many years. He was within his rights, and Gerard's savings must needs go to satisfy his greed. Mrs. Fontaine's jewellery was sold by auction; and penniless she and her girls must face the world.

Hiram had made known his intention of at once taking up his residence at the Abbey, and intimated that its present occupants should quit, as he had no desire to make the acquaintance of folks who had swindled him so long.

Olive, the second girl, just sixteen, rose impetuously,—

"We will not sleep another night beneath his roof; mother, let us go."

Elsie, who was only twelve, began to cry, but Claire the eldest, just nearing eighteen, and until now the most placable of the family, said, under her breath,—

"He shall suffer for the insults he has heaped upon father's memory—if I were a man I would shoot him down like a cur."

They looked at her in amazement; from out the whiteness of her lovely face her purple grey eyes gleamed with strange fire, and her lips were set in a hard line. Mrs. Fontaine touched her gently,—

"My dear, my dear, the young man has only demanded his rights," but Claire said,—

"He has done more; he has cast us beggars upon the world, loaded us with dishonour—and oh! one day he shall regret it. There—don't look so scared, mother; I shall do nothing hastily, but I vow that you shall yet return to the Abbey, its honoured mistress. In the meanwhile to live we must work, and it is time that you started for Mr. Swainson's. To-morrow you will come into Weston and tell me what he advises; I can't remain here to run the risk of meeting our beloved cousin Hiram, and as the Holts have asked me over, I shall accept."

Weeping, the widow and the younger girls left the Abbey, but Claire shed never a tear; only her eyes were full of revolt, and her face expressive of some stern resolve, as she closed the great gates behind her, and went out into the world.

Mr. and Mrs. Swainson had cordially pressed Mrs. Fontaine and her girls to remain with them until some definite plans had been made for the future, but Claire preferred to go to the Holts, at Weston, saying, with a bitter smile that by so doing she would avoid the pain and indignity of meeting "that low American."

Duly Hiram arrived, and all Lilywold was at its doors or windows to criticise the unfortunate young man, and all Lilywold declared him to be a disappointment, as he lolled in his luxurious carriage, smoking a cigarette.

He was about twenty-five, did not exceed five feet six, and was of spare build, with the typical American face, long, lean, shrewd—mean grey eyes, straw-coloured hair, and a moustache like a whip of hay.

"Must be a changeling," said one old lady, "there never was a Fontaine like him—easy to tell by his bearing he never before owned a carriage."

"He may have pushed a barrow," said another, spitefully, "and he is sure to talk through his nose; chews, of course, and no doubt indulges in profanity."

Unconscious of these adverse criticisms, Mr. Fontaine reached his new home.

"Beastly dull old place," he remarked to the coachman. "Kind of Noah's ark concern; but I'll soon chalk alterations on it;" the man made no reply.

He was a native of Lilywold, and it was little short of sacrilege to him to hear the grand grey old building, with its ivy covered towers, spoken of in such a fashion.

Once inside "his ancestral hall" as he chose to designate the abbey, Mr. Hiram Fontaine loudly abused the old furniture, the dark mullioned windows, the large, low rooms with their heavy oak beams and panelling, and did his best to make his servants thoroughly detest him.

In the morning as he dawdled over his late breakfast, clad in an oriental dressing-gown and slippers of diverse colours, Mr. Swainson was announced. Hiram took no notice of him for a moment, then glancing insolently at him with a horrid twang,—

"So you're Swainson! Well, I'm glad you marched up, and I may as well tell you at once, I intend taking my affairs out of your hands; you've pettifogged too long for my scoundrelly

cousin to be of any use to me. So what business remains to be done, I shall place in Boswell's hands—he's my man—"

"Very well, sir, you have merely anticipated my wish. I came to ask you to choose your own solicitor, as under any circumstances I should decline to act for you. I have one other subject to mention, it needs your thoughtful care—"

"Go ahead, and don't preach—I won't stand it, sir, from an inferior."

Swainson coloured slightly but kept his temper admirably.

"I wish to remind you that Mrs. Fontaine and her daughters, who are at present my guests, are absolutely penniless; out of your plenty will you not afford them some help?"

"I'm hanged if I do. They've lived on the fat of the land long enough; they have had the smooth and I—I, the rightful owner, sir—have had the rough. You don't mean to tell me that they didn't know of the old chap's whereabouts, or his son's birth—nor nothing—I mean anything about them. Gerard Fontaine and his father before him, didn't want to know. Do you think I'm fool enough to beggar myself for the sake of a pack o' thieves. Let 'em work as I did—as I ain't ashamed to say I did—twelve hours every mortal day—"

"Whether as dock labourer or scavenger your class must be the gainer by your loss," remarked Swainson in the quietest of tones. "I am sorry—having seen you, that I subjected myself to your insolence, and those innocent ladies to your brutality," and taking up his hat he went out, Hiram flinging a vile expletive after him.

"Am I master in my own house or ain't I!" he roared to a servant who came in obedience to his call; "look here, if any of you let that methody-looking old humbug in again, out you go. I guess I ain't to be dictated to by a pettifogging old fool of a lawyer; why I could buy the whole blessed place up if I liked. And I say, don't you dare breathe the old woman's name or the gals in my hearing. Curse 'em, they've had their innings, I'll take mine now!"

That was his attitude at first, but when he found himself the object of much adverse criticism, he began to reflect if it would not be wiser to "do something for the beggars," and so called on Mr. Swainson, requesting to see Mrs. Fontaine.

The widow trembling a little, went to meet him, rather awing him by her quiet dignity and gentle grace.

"See here," he began in his boisterous fashion, "I ain't a bad sort of fellow when people don't rub me the wrong way, but I get downright riled when I find I've been cheated; I like to get my own end kept it. But it's rather rough on you and the gals—girls I mean, and I don't mind doing a little for you as long as you're civil. There's a cottage next to the Fontaine Arms, you can live rent free in if you like, and with that and ten shillings a week, you and the youngster would be comfortable. Of course the other two must shift for themselves, it ain't likely I shall keep them. What d'ye say?"

The delicate colour came and went in the widow's worn face; a look of indignation a moment darkened her faded eyes, then she answered, steadily,—

"I thank you for your offer, sir, even whilst I decline it; Mr. Swainson has generously come to my assistance, and we shall not vex you long by our presence here."

"Please yourself; you know my terms; take 'em or leave 'em."

"Sir, we are not ashamed to work, and poverty is no crime—but the cottage you have placed at my disposal is scarcely fit to shelter pigs."

He began to bluster.

"Beggars can't be choosers, and allow me tell you, ma'am, that few men in my position would act so generously; and it ain't customary to look a gift horse in the mouth."

"You have said enough to convince me, sir, I should be mad to accept your charity," and with a slight inclination of her head she left him to his wrath.

The cottage he had offered stood alone, and had been empty many years; the windows were broken, the doors so rotten they would scarcely

hang, and the floor of the two lower rooms was earthen.

When (thanks to Mr. Swainson) the truth became known, Hiram Fontaine did not find his position improved; only the rakes and ne'er-do-wells of the county tendering him a friendly hand.

CHAPTER II.

ACTING upon Mr. Swainson's advice, and assisted by his purse, Mrs. Fontaine hired a house at Hastings, whither she and the girls repaired. It was prettily and daintily furnished, and was intended for the reception of boarders who required refined and cultured society.

Claire was seeking for a situation as governess; hoping soon to relieve her mother of one burthen; and, in justice to the girls, it must be conceded they did not mind the privation or toil for themselves, only for their mother.

They were young and still hopeful; they could not believe that all their good fortune was irretrievably gone. Claire had said very little when made acquainted with her cousin's insolent advances, only,—

"He has given me another reason to remember him."

Then, Olive, with a slight, sad laugh, had answered,—

"We are far away enough now from Lilywold; you had better forget your vow."

"No; it is for you to forget and be happy, if you can; but remembrance will remain with me until death," the girl added heavily. "Don't you recollect, Olive, that one day when you and I were choosing mottoes for our life-guidance, mine was 'Nil Desperandum,' yours, 'Faithful until death!' Well, I will keep mine; I will not despair. I should go mad if I did. I don't care at what cost it is to myself, I will give mother back wealth and friends; and, please Heaven, her home."

In the name of Claire Herbert—her mother's surname—she advertised for employment.

Mrs. Fontaine said, gently,—

"Surely, dear child, you do not think it a disgrace to your father's race to work for your bread?"

And she answered quietly,—

"No, mother darling; but when I meet Hiram Fontaine, he must know my identity as little as he knows my face."

"Claire, give up whatever wild scheme you are planning, and be our own gentle, loving, lovable girl again."

"I wish I could," she cried in utmost pain and anguish of soul, "but I cannot go back to my old self. I seem lost, mother, I never dreamed I could be so resentful. I felt when they brought father home my heart would break with its grief; but I was not *hard* then. It was only when we learned the truth, and that vile wretch dared impugn the honour of our dead, that I knew what hate and rage are like. Oh, mother—oh, my mother! I could have borne anything else without a murmur—anything but that, and the knowledge of your destitution, and Elsie's failing strength."

"Hush, dear, hush!" said the mother weeping and fondling the soft, white hands. "We are doing as well as I dared to hope, and when once I have paid Mr. Swainson his generous loan, Elsie shall have better advice. You must not brood over our wrongs, but remember our blessings. Heaven has been very good to us, and raised up many friends for us."

But alas! she spoke to deaf ears. Never was a creature so changed as lovely, light-hearted Claire Fontaine—her once sweet and beautiful nature seemed in terrible danger of being utterly warped. Only through deep and awful affliction could that proud heart be humbled—that bitter spirit quelled.

One day she received a letter from her friend, Alice Holt, in which she said,—

"That horrid little American is going away, and we rejoice exceedingly. He finds Lilywold and the county dull, 'the people perfect barbarians,' and has bought a shooting-box somewhere close to Ben-na-Loch, where, it appears, he

has friends staying. And he intends to spend some time there, then go on to Nice, returning in March to town. He has somewhat improved in his manners and speech, and does not wear such glaring garments or so great a profusion of jewellery; but nothing can erase the word snob from his brow and bearing. Pray don't be angry, but Nannie and I call him the 'organ man's monkey!' and when we have chanced to meet him, have—for your sake, dear,—treated him so rudely that I blush to recall my conduct."

Claire sat brooding over this letter when Olive entered with a "daily," and opened the advertisement sheet,—

"Here you are, Claire," she said with a sigh, "the old weary search, the old disappointment will be gone through again. Why cannot you stay with us contentedly?"

But Claire's white forefinger was running rapidly down the long list of wants, until suddenly it paused, and her face grew white. She felt suffocating as, rising, she flung open a window and leaned out. She dared not let Olive see her expression then, for this is what she read again through a half-blinding mist,—

"A young married American lady desires a companion; must be musical, lively, refined, and a gentlewoman. Salary generous. Age not to exceed twenty-two. Apply, Mrs. Arbuthnot, Burns Hollow, Ben-na-Loch."

That was the place where Hiram Fontaine had, for awhile pitched his tent. It might be even possible that this Mrs. Arbuthnot was his friend.

"If so," thought Claire, with curling lip, "she is either an adventuress or a low-born *noirceau vicie*; but if I can get the situation I will endure any discomfort to further my own ends."

So it came about that she applied for the post, and at the close of a week received a reply which was eminently satisfactory.

Mrs. Arbuthnot was pleased with the tone of her letter, and would engage her at a salary of sixty pounds per annum. But, for their mutual benefit, she would prefer Miss Herbert should come to her for a month before either agreed to make the arrangement a permanent one.

To those she loved Claire said nothing of her discovery, feeling convinced that they would oppose her going, and not willingly would she inflict fresh pain upon her mother's gentle, suffering heart.

So on the day appointed she bade them all good-bye, her mother and Elsie clinging sobbingly to her, Olive trying to be brave, because henceforth she must be as elder daughter and sister; but Claire did not shed a tear, she was beyond that sweet relief.

The journey was a long and very wearisome one; indeed it was growing dusk when she reached her destination. There a luxuriously appointed brougham awaited her, and an obsequious servant giving careful instructions concerning her luggage; then she was driven slowly up a very rough and rocky road, which at a certain point dipped with alarming rapidity, disclosing to view Burns Hollow, the house of her mistress.

A bright looking maid met her in the hall, and with the words "Will you please follow me, Miss; mistress said you would perhaps prefer to dine in the boudoir," led the way thither. It was a bright, pleasant apartment, and a table had been spread readily for one. As Claire entered a lady, rather pretty and most elegantly dressed, sprang from a low seat and extending her hand said:

"Welcome, Miss Herbert. Oh, please stand back a moment that I may see you well. Why you are a mere child, and do you guess how lovely you are! I ought to be jealous, but I won't; we will be good friends, for you see there is so much you will have to teach me. I'm not a lady, but I'm learning to be one, and I want to be perfect in my part before the beginning of next season, because for a consideration the Duchess of Grigsbury is going to present me. I am only a Yankee, a mere nobody, countenanced just because I am rich, and oh, how hungry you must be! Throw off your wraps and do justice to a good square meal." Nothing could be warmer than the little lady's welcome, and but that Claire's unfortunate experiences had in a measure made her distrustful she would have succumbed at once to the other's fascinations.

As it was, she replied with a gentle courtesy which delighted Mrs. Arbuthnot, for it told her that her companion, whatever might be her present circumstances had been reared in an atmosphere of refinement, and was "a lady (as the American expressed it), from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot."

Whilst Claire ate and drank she rattled on in a rather ready voice, "As we are going to be awful friends, I shall begin by telling you something of myself. Pa was a huckster away down 'Frisco, and made a pile among the miners there; then he sent me to New York to make a lady of me, although he could scarcely 'tote' up accounts himself."

"But he was real good, and I don't think I knew what trouble was until he died. I don't remember ma, but I guess she led the dear old governor a life, because he never seemed to regret her loss."

"Well, when I was left alone, I didn't get much fun for all my being an heiress, because my guardian and his wife were awfully pious people; so when Mr. Arbuthnot proposed I jumped at the chance, though he is twenty years my senior."

"I am just three-and-twenty. You see he was, and is awfully fond of me, and as he had a good deal of money, and was received everywhere, I thought I couldn't do better than say yes."

"You see, I never did believe in the love the poets rave about, can't understand it, must be an uncomfortable state to be in," then she laughed out merrily at Claire's astonishment over her very frank confession, "Oh, let me be the old man's darling in preference to the young man's slave. I was born to be made much of; as a poor man's wife I should have been an awful failure."

"Now I must be going down. We have only a small house party just now; next week the place will be full. Mr. Arbuthnot's friend Hiram Fontaine will be with us. He is an awful little cad, but Dick likes him and says there's more in him than I guess."

"I'll tell you his story to-morrow, and if you're wise you'll set your cap at 'my lord Tom Noddy' (my name for him in private). Gracious! How white you are! I hope you aren't going to faint."

"No, no," said Claire by a violent effort controlling herself.

"I am only more tired than I thought at first, and coming immediately out of the frosty air into this warm room was rather trying. Pray, believe me, Mrs. Arbuthnot, I am very strong. I don't believe I ever alluded anything all my life, unless it was the measles."

"I am glad of that, because I want you to accompany me everywhere. I love pleasure; couldn't endure a quiet life under any conditions." Then in a softer tone, "You have had a recent and heavy loss, Miss Herbert?"

"My father," the girl answered in a very low voice.

"Ah, then you do not want to hear any more of my nonsense now, and of course if you wish it, I will excuse you from sharing all my gaieties."

"I am yours to command," said Claire a trifle proudly. "I will accept my wage only on condition that I earn it."

"So! you're proud as you are beautiful. Now really I must go, but don't forget my advice concerning Hiram Fontaine."

"Despite the fact that he is an awful little cad?" queried Claire.

"Oh! my dear, money covers a multitude of sins, and on his dad's side he has good birth; believe me, you might do worse. Go to bed when you please, and you shall have breakfast sent up in the morning."

CHAPTER III.

THERE WAS not an empty nook or cranny in Burns Hollow by the middle of the next week. The maids slept in double-bedded attics, the ladies shared dressing and bedrooms alike, but Claire's privacy did not suffer.

With a delicacy which could hardly have been expected of her, Mrs. Arbuthnot had flatter-

declined to oust her from her dainty chamber, or permit her to share it with a guest.

"You see," she said to her husband, "Miss Herbert is a lady, although she *does* earn her own livelihood, and I intend to treat her accordingly."

Later, when she had made known her decision to Claire, she added,—

"Of course, if you could spare your dressing-room for a fortnight I would be obliged, because Cissy and Paquita Cross (some friends of my single days) want to come, and I haven't a hole left big enough for a mouse to creep in; if I refuse I shall hurt them and I don't want to do that."

Of course Claire promptly agreed to the arrangement; she was really learning to like Mrs. Arbuthnot, who treated her with unflinching kindness and frank comradeship.

She might have been very happy in her new state but for two things. The first was that passionate, restless craving for revenge; the desire to make Hiram suffer as he had made her parents suffer; and the second was her fear for Elsie, whose always delicate health had grown a matter for grave anxiety since their fortunes changed.

There was nothing selfish in the girl; her faults were those of an excessively fond and proud nature; she hardly realised that she erred in cherishing such bitter resentment against their enemy—she owed to him her father's death, her mother's desolation and poverty, all the evils which had befallen them, and last—but not least—the pang of separation from those who had never needed her so much as now.

On the Wednesday Mrs. Arbuthnot went running into her room.

"Oh Miss Herbert," she said, "I am so sorry we cannot go for our promised drive. Dick has asked me to ride with him to Ben-na-Loch, to meet Fontaine. We must put him up somehow for a couple of days, as Macgregor Lodge is not yet in a fit state to receive him. Remember all I have told you except that his manners lack polish—and good-bye."

She ran off then, waiting no reply. Presently Claire saw her ride slowly away with Mr. Arbuthnot, and then she stood by the window, tall, slender, with the brooding shadows growing ever deeper in her eyes.

The slow moments went by; an hour had almost stretched out its weary length when she heard the trampling of horse's hoofs, and with a start realised her enemy was near.

He rode between husband and wife, and Claire was compelled to admit that whatever he did badly, he rode well.

Her face went ashen white, as she looked down upon him.

Was this insignificant atom of humanity the creature who had wrought such devastation? Could she ever succeed in disguising her hatred and contempt of him? Could she stoop to contact with him? Every good and girlish instinct revolted against the thought; she shrank shudderingly down upon her bed moaning out,—

"It is my duty! it is my fate! I will not shirk the one or fear the other," and fighting hard for courage and composure found both.

When she went down to luncheon Hiram was talking volubly to Mrs. Arbuthnot and a guest named Athelstan Bayard, a handsome, clever young barrister who, however, was yet almost briefless and had no expectations from any influential relatives.

He was a great favourite with the daughters of the house-parties where he appeared, but the mothers regarded him as a detrimental, and there were vexed hearts even amongst the Burns Hollow guests, that Mrs. Arbuthnot had imprudently included him in the number.

As Claire entered he immediately joined her, thus drawing Hiram's attention directly to her.

"Oh I say, Tibbie," he said, in a queer breathless way, "who on earth is that lovely creature? Why didn't you tell me you'd got a beauty here? Is she single? Why haven't I seen her before? I suppose she's already snapped up!"

"Hiram, one question at a time if you please, and really you must learn to moderate your

language a little. Do I talk as I used when we made mud pies together away down at Bazing Bar? Haven't I improved since then?"

"You bet! My, what a stunner you were—and what a queer old stick your governor was! Tim's have changed for us both—guess you wouldn't have turned up your pretty little nose at me Tibbie, if you'd known who I was."

"You were Hiram Fontaine then, you are still Hiram Fontaine," she retorted, with something like a flash of anger in her eyes, for his disrespectful mention of her father hurt her. "I have a great inclination not to tell you one word about your *vara avis*."

"You wouldn't be so cruel, Tibbie; and I'm as good as that long-legged chap that's talking to her any day. I've heard he hasn't a penny of his own."

"But," with sly malice, "he is so *very* handsome, so engaging in manner. Poor dear Hiram, no wonder you are green with envy; pity, that money can buy neither beauty nor breeding. There, don't scowl so dreadfully—the girl is Miss Herbert. She is—to my belief heart-whole and fancy-free, and she is at present my most intimate associate. Come along and I'll introduce you."

Too confident in his own powers of attraction, and of the glamour with which his wealth invested him, Hiram went with her gladly.

He had never looked on such exquisite beauty, such perfection of girlish grace, and even his small, callous heart throbbed a little faster under its spell.

"Miss Herbert," said Mrs. Arbuthnot, "may I introduce an old friend?" and waiting no reply she proceeded with the ceremony.

Hiram at once presented his hand; but Claire with a faint decrease of colour avoided it, and bowing coldly, spoke a few formal words, then returned to her conversation with Athelstan.

Hiram grew crimson with rage, and seemed about to bluster, when Tibbie drew him aside to say with mock reproach, although to him the mockery was not apparent,—

"How could you make such an awful blunder! You must really go in for a course of training—naturally Miss Herbert resented such familiarity, she is *by birth* a lady."

"And I am a gentleman; hang it, if a Fontaine isn't good enough for her, who is! She'd jump at my advances if she knew my fortune."

"I am not so sure of that," answered Tibbie, delighted to torment him; "she isn't like most girls, and English girls are very different to Yankees. Over the water we think most of the almighty dollar—here, they actually sneer at it—blue blood is their first idol, and a gold coin their next. Tell them you have a fortune in so many million dollars—they instantly reduce them to pounds, and say 'Is that all! What a show you Yanks make about nothing'—then Hiram, you can't forget your mother was a laundry maid."

He broke in hurriedly, disliking the turn their conversation had taken—

"Well, anyhow, Tibbie, who is Miss Herbert when she's at home! Just be straight with me and I'll bet my bottom dollar in less than a month I'll cut out any fellow who is hanging round her, and I daresay there are plenty."

"Athelstan Bayard is very far gone, and there are two or three others; for the rest, my dear Hiram, Miss Herbert is an orphan, or rather her father is dead, she has a mother and sisters; but they are left ill provided for. Claire is not only my friend, but my *paid* companion."

He stared at her with open mouth and eyes, then he ejaculated,—

"Gad! she's only a servant after all! and she dared play off her airs and graces upon me."

"I don't suppose," said Mrs. Tibbie, "that she considers you worthy to black her shoes; and whilst you are my guest, you will treat her as my most honoured friend."

Hiram was very silent after his hostess left him; like most Americans he preached "liberty, equality, fraternity," but he never went beyond precept, and now that he was himself a wealthy man he could hardly understand Claire's attitude towards him, or her independence of mind. He remained thoughtful all that day, and when

dressing for dinner gave his valet very little trouble.

He was pondering one question over and over again in his cunning if small mind; and finally he answered it to his own satisfaction. Claire Herbert was beautiful, young, highborn, and he was shrewd enough to see that in his own county he would never be accepted save on sufferance, unless he had some powerful ally. Well, then, he would marry, and he was quite rich enough to dispense with a dowry with his bride—if Claire had a fortune she would probably look for a title; having nothing she would gladly accept him, and having comforted himself with this reflection, he went downstairs confident of victory.

"I'm going in for the beauty," he whispered to Mrs. Arbuthnot as he took her down.

"We leave here on the twelfth of November," she answered; "bet you five sovereigns you haven't won her by then."

"Done! I shall not forget."

After dinner, when everybody assembled in the drawing-room, Athelstan begged Claire to sing them once again "Lochaber's farewell;" she instantly complied, following it (at Tibbie's request) with "The Lament of Flora," then resuming her seat by the American girls began to chat carelessly when, approaching her, Hiram said,—

"Oh, I say, Miss Herbert, that ain't fair. You haven't given me a single song; let's have 'The Star Spangled Banner,' or some stirring song like that—you won't refuse?"

"I shall not sing again to night, Mr. Fontaine," she answered, letting her beautiful cold eyes rest upon him a moment, "and I know nothing of the ballads you mention."

Her tone was perfectly courteous for all its coldness, and Hiram was staggered. Why the girl even seemed to dislike him, and it added not a little to his chagrin that he caught the faintest flicker of a smile hovering about Bayard's lips.

"Curse him!" he said to himself, "he thinks he's going to get her, but he shan't—the beggarly quill driver—he needy thieving lawyer. They shan't laugh at Hiram Fontaine at the end of the chapter! Curious, though, that she being so confoundedly poor, shouldn't hold out a friendly hand to me. Praps thinks I'm playing with her. Wants to make sure of my intentions! Well, I don't know but what she's right—and Jove! she is lovely," and comforting himself with the thought, "She'll be glad to say yes when I put the question, 'Will you be my wife,' straightforward," and he went to bed and to sleep.

In the few following days Claire's persistent avoidance of him, her cold reception of his advances only fanned the flame of his weak love, and increased his resolve to win her at any cost, especially as he saw that Athelstan Bayard's poverty alone prevented him declaring himself. Mrs. Arbuthnot herself took Claire to task.

"You silly child," she said, "why do you try to burn your boats! Why don't you take the gifts the gods offer. You might be Mrs. Fontaine to-morrow if you chose, and yet you treat that poor little wretch Hiram as you would not treat a dog."

"Don't you know," asked Claire, with a slow, bitter smile, "that a man always values most the prize which was hardest to win."

"Oh! and indeed I have been thinking you innocent whilst you are only cunning."

"That if you like; one day you will judge me, and by that judgment I shall abide."

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was scarcely ever any variation in Claire's manner towards her cousin; if she addressed him in kindly fashion one moment, she revenged herself for the remainder of the day by treating him with coldest disdain, until between his anger and his love he was almost at his wits end.

The more she retreated, the more eagerly he pursued, until it was an established fact that Claire Herbert, had only to say the word and she would be mistress of Fontaine Abbey, and its

revenues; "but unfortunately," said Tibbie to Paquita Cross, "they would be encumbered by a husband—such a husband! He is the meanest little load under the sun; but according to our lights, my dear, Claire would be wiser to marry him than take that handsome Athelstan, as I am sure she is half inclined to do. Why bless me they would have to live on kisses without the bread and cheese."

"Unsubstantial fare," said Paquita who was of a sentimental turn of mind. "But I cannot help feeling sorry for them; he is such a darling, and Claire Herbert is beautiful enough to turn any man's head."

"Well, it's an old and a true saying that when poverty enters the door, love flies out of the window, and then there's a pretty prospect before one. I don't like Hiram, but I *do* like Claire, and I want to see her happy."

Miss Herbert remained a sort of mystery to her cousin. She never spoke of her friends, although she received letters often. Those she herself wrote she posted always, no matter how inclement the weather or how often the male portion of the party volunteered to carry them for her.

The very mystery attaching to her made her doubly attractive, whilst her presence at Burns Hollow was a sufficient guarantee of character and standing.

Towards the close of October the whole party moved to Macgregor Lodge and here, even without Tibbie Arbuthnot's manoeuvres, Claire could not fail to be seen in Hiram's society.

One day he found her alone.

"Miss Herbert," he said, "don't run away, it's time you and I had an understanding. I can't see for the life of me why you dislike me. I'm young, rich, well-born, and—er, not so very bad looking."

"I don't dislike you," she answered, quietly, as she glanced beyond him, adding to herself, "because I *hate* and despise you."

But he could not read the unspoken thought and his face flushed as he drew a little nearer.

"You don't know how much I think of you, Miss Herbert, or how much I would do for you, if only you would let me. But you seem so taken with that fellow Bayard, that I never get a chance of speaking—there!" as she flashed upon him with angry eyes, "I meant no offence, but I ain't—haven't got the neatest way of expressing myself—but it'll come in time. You see my education was a good deal neglected, still, it don't make me less a gentleman, and I want you to feel that I am proud to know you and hope soon to meet your ma and sisters. Now, couldn't they come out here for a week or two? I'd pay all expenses."

Her face flushed, she felt suffocated with indignation and humiliation. She shrank in horror from the purpose before her, she thought of Athelstan and grew weak, then she said slowly—

"You are very good, or mean to be, Mr. Fontaine, but neither my mother nor sisters would accept your hospitality on such terms. You ask an impossibility."

He was about to reply when Tibbie and Paquita came upon them, to Claire's relief and Hiram's disgust, and after a few careless words the girl made her escape.

In her own room—the handsomest the house contained—she stood erect asking of her heart,—

"Can I do it! Can I do it! Is there no other way!" and could find no reply to her question.

That afternoon she wandered alone down the mountain side, there to encounter Athelstan Bayard. She turned as though to flee, but he was too swift for her.

Dearer to him than all his hopes of advancement, sweeter than fame, more precious than untold gold was Claire to him.

Sometimes he believed she loved him, but oftener he was oppressed by doubts, for indeed, she lavished few favours upon him, and seemed even to repent those she granted.

Yet there were times when her lovely eyes were full of tender light as they met his, and her voice took a sweeter tone, and from such slight signs as these he drew some hope.

"I saw you start," he said, as he joined her "and took a short cut to meet you. One never gets a chance of speech at The Lodge, and you know I must be off to town in the course of three

days. Claire, are you going to send me away the happiest man on earth? Dear, I will be perfectly frank with you. I am poor, horribly so, but I am young, and with you to spur me on to fortune I must win. If you will only let me know the prize is waiting for me at the end, I shall care for nothing else. I don't wish to hurry you, in any case our engagement would be a protracted one, and the thought of that has kept me silent when I would have spoken. But we are both in the heyday of youth, and if we love each other, what does a little waiting matter? Oh, my Bonnie sweetheart, what will you say to me now?"

His honestly spoken love, his frank confession of poverty moved her more than the most eloquent pleading could have done, and then, oh! Heaven help her, she loved him in return.

She was shaken to the centre of her soul, so white and trembling that she could not withdraw from his encircling arm or utter any protest when he kissed her once with tender passion upon her quivering lips.

All her heart cried out,—

"Take him to yourself, in him lies your happiness, rest and be glad."

But then a voice thundered in her ears,—

"Remember your oath! remember those who depend so much upon you! If you make life pleasant to yourself, what help can you afford them?" and she drew herself out of his embrace.

But she was so shaken by passion and pain that she was not then capable of arriving at any decision, and she temporized with him.

"Mr. Bayard, we have known each other so short a time, you are in absolute ignorance of my family and surroundings."

"I shall believe all that you choose to tell me," he broke in, "You will not lie."

"But I am poor; I have nothing of my own, and I have resolved to set aside one half my salary towards the payment of a debt my mother was unable to avoid. I cannot turn my back upon my sisters—they are so young—and and I have sworn to be their support—"

"Claire, I love you all the more for your generosity, and I would not seek to turn you from your purpose; rather let me help you to its fulfilment. I have no belongings of my own—your people shall be mine—"

But then she burst into most unaccustomed tears, crying,—

"Don't! don't! your goodness breaks my heart. How dare I burden you at the very beginning of your life, with the support of those I love? You must try to forget me."

"I shall never do that; and what a woman can endure should not weigh heavily upon a man's shoulders. Claire, my beautiful darling, come to me!"

She was quiet again now.

"Wait; I will not answer you in haste, lest each repents. Two nights from this it will be All Hallow E'en, when by common superstition maids may see the wraith or real personality of their husbands. I shall be on the terrace at twelve, but I shall not use any charm or bewitchment, and from the answer I give you I will not swerve. Now, say no more—I must be quiet, and you must be patient."

Nothing would move her from that decision, but all through the remainder of the day and in the long hours of the night, her heart pleaded with her for Athelstan. All that was best and noblest, all that was truest and gentlest in her nature, had risen to the surface. When morning came she had almost resolved to end her lover's suspense, and went down to breakfast looking lovelier than ever, with that soft expression in her eyes, and the smiles ready to curve her mouth.

It was an unhappy circumstance that Hiram should choose this very morning to descend upon his accession to fortune and the iniquity which had so long been triumphant. Her father's name was the first word Claire heard as she entered; it was spoken in her cousin's voice,

"Did Gerard Fontaine know he was usurping the property? Of course he did. He and his father before him were rogues; but right's right, and I've got my own at last—every penny of it."

He paused a moment; looking across at Claire,

Athelstan was startled by the whiteness of her face, the strange gleam in her eyes.

"You are ill, Miss Herbert," he said.

But she answered, quickly,—

"Not at all; please don't notice me. I am interested in Mr. Fontaine's story—I have not heard it before; go on," and all the while her steady gaze never left the host's face.

Her slim white hands were clenched in the folds of her dress, but she gave no sign of feeling, and Hiram, pleased that he had at length won her attention only waited for Tibbie to say,—

"The Fontaines were reported nice; what came of them?"

"Oh, I sent them—mother and daughters—packing. I did not intend to harbour a nest of vipers; where they are, or what they may be doing I don't care a brass farthing."

"But they are your relatives; you cannot get away from that," remarked Athelstan, "and even if Fontaine was aware of your existence, which (with all due deference to you) I very much doubt, I cannot see why his womenfolk should suffer; they at least have done you no wrong."

"I tell you," rejoined the other, angrily, "they were all in the swim; and after their downfall had the impudence to send a lawyer fellow to me begging for help. I did make them some sort of an offer, which they declined because it was not good enough—they wronged me and mine—and now they may starve for all I care! One thing is certain, not a penny of the Fontaine coin shall ever cross their palms."

"Look to Miss Herbert," cried Arbuthnot. The girl had suddenly risen, and with outstretched hands was staggering towards the door. Tibbie sprang to her side.

"Take me out," she gasped, "I am choking."

And then she was led away with a stony horror on her face which would not have disgraced Medusa. In a little while Tibbie came back.

"She is lying down," she said, "and I hope will soon be better—the room was too warm, and she did an unusual amount of climbing yesterday."

In her own chamber, face downwards on the bed lay Claire writhing as one in mortal anguish.

"Liar and coward!" she muttered through her clenched teeth, "you have brought it upon yourself; bear the punishment as best you may. The struggle with my good angel is over, the bad has conquered; farewell to the old self—shall I sink to your level, I wonder—shall I? From to-day, evil is to be my good; oh father, father! thank Heaven you can never know!"

She did not appear again until evening, when a letter was handed to her; it was from her mother who wrote in direct distress. Elsie was much worse; the medical man thought it impossible she could endure another English winter, and they had no funds to take her abroad.

"Even if I would go back I dare not now," she thought, "and his money shall save Elsie."

CHAPTER V.

ALL the next day she persistently avoided Athelstan, knowing what was in her heart she felt like a very traitress towards him; but to Hiram she was gracious, so that in his vanity he believed that her former coldness was but the outcome of coquetry, or the fear that he was only amusing himself.

He was so pleased with the idea that this beautiful girl had fallen victim to his fascinations that he felt like a benevolent sovereign, quite ready to play Ahasuerus to her Esther.

In the evening she gave him the opportunity he sought, hating herself the while for doing so. He was quick to avail himself of it.

Joining her as she stood by a window, he said,—

"I have caught you alone at last, and I've something to say which must be said quickly before the others join us. Miss Herbert, you know, I think a great deal more of you than any other girl I've ever met, and I believe you like me a little, although you did hold off so long.

P'raps you thought I shouldn't care to marry a portionless girl, but, bless you, I've enough and to spare for us both; and if you're willing to take me, you can't fail to be happy; and I'm not the sort of fellow to fling your poverty in your face."

Was ever a proposal so brutally worded? Did ever a man appear so poor and mean when he went a wooing, as this smug, self-satisfied American?

Claire caught her breath and clenched her hands. Oh, surely death would be preferable to the humiliation she was seeking. But her dead father's honour, her darling Elsie's life!

Slowly she spoke, never glancing at him.

"Mr. Fontaine, I value myself so highly that I do not feel overwhelmed by your proposal. I am of birth superior to your own, and have been reduced to my present subordinate position only by misfortune. If I accept your offer it will be only upon my own conditions."

He was staggered, and looked at her out of his cunning little eyes with a mixture of anger and admiration.

She was not only beautiful but a clear, level-headed girl. She would not squander the wealth so dear to him; and when he had recovered his astonishment he made answer,—

"Of course I am prepared to do things handsomely. I shall make princely settlements upon you," but she stayed him with a swift gesture of negation.

"I ask nothing for myself, I am content to be a pensioner on your bounty; but I have a mother and two sisters, who by my marriage would lose even the little sum I had proposed to allow them. They have been delicately reared, and poverty is hard to bear."

"I did not propose to marry the family but you," he answered very stiffly.

"You will, of course, please yourself, Mr. Fontaine. But my first condition is that you settle upon them the sum of a thousand pounds annually. I told you I did not undervalue myself, and it is a mere trifle out of your colossal fortune."

"By Jingo! you are a cool hand! What if I refuse to agree to your terms?"

"I shall not marry you, that is all; and I should imagine that your own personal pride would revolt at the idea of your wife's relatives earning their own bread. Well, that is my first condition, my second is that should we marry, our wedding shall be of the quietest description."

This last idea pleased him. He did not care to think of the cost of a fashionable function, so he said,—

"By that you mean only your own people would be present?"

Her face whitened.

"They will not be there; they will know nothing of my marriage until it is an accomplished fact. Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot would be witnesses—we need no other. But that you may not reproach me afterwards with hurrying your decision, I will not accept your answer until Thursday, which is two days' hence."

"You're taking a deuced high hand with me," he said, sulkily, "and not many men would think twice on the subject. But I am generous to a fault, and 'pon my soul, I love you, Claire, so we'll settle matters at once with a kiss."

She shrank back in horror.

"No. I will hear nothing definite until Thursday, and until then you will please remember you are my acquaintance, not my lover."

Before he could utter any protest she was gone. And throughout the two following days he brooded over her words, love (?) fighting with greed. But nothing helped him so much to his decision as Tibbie's words,—

"Athelstan Bayard has proposed for Claire. I know he has; and I guess she will take him."

Then came All Hallow E'en, and Claire, knowing how impossible it would be, and how bitterly cruel to keep Athelstan in ignorance of her decision, did not attempt to avoid the interview she had promised him.

They went out together into the gardens, and halting beneath the long line of mountain ash, Athelstan turned to her as though to clasp her

hands, but she held back, and he, a little hurt, a little dismayed, pleaded,—

"Claire, what does this mean? Am I to accept it as an ill omen? To-morrow I am leaving here, I cannot go without my answer. I know that you love me—your own lips have confessed it. But marriage does not always follow love; and it may be that my poverty frightens you."

She caught her breath sharply, as though she had received a heavy blow; then she said in a voice so low that he could hardly hear her words,—

"Heaven help me! I do love you. If fate had been less cruel we might have been so happy, but now that can never be. Oh, you will believe me mercenary, when indeed I am not so; but appearances will be against me, and—and, perhaps, it is best you should think evil of me, because, Athelstan, I must send you away—hopeless."

He was silent, and she dared not look into his face. The tower clock was striking twelve; and a grey mist was falling, and all around was eerie and sad.

Presently Athelstan spoke in a voice which, for all its harshness, was low,—

"Of course I have a rival, who has at last definitely made known his wishes; equally, of course, he has more to recommend him than I."

"Oh!" she cried, in the bitterness of her soul, "show me a little mercy! If it is true I give myself to my richer suitor it is for the sake of others, not my own. Athelstan, to-night we are saying good-bye, will you not leave some kind word behind with which I may comfort my aching heart in the heavy days before me? Kiss me good-bye; oh, love! oh, my love!"

But he, looking coldly down upon her, asked,—

"Who is this happier man?"

She lifted her eyes, and on the terrace she saw Hiram.

"Look!" she whispered, "fate has chosen for me; it is *All Hallow E'en*."

He caught and grasped her arm, glaring into her eyes, whilst he said,—

"What mockery is this! What devil tempted you to play so vile a trick upon me! Are you jesting or in sober earnest? Do you mean to marry that cad?"

"If he will have me, yes," she answered, heavily.

Without a word he left her.

Could scorn be deeper! She would have cried aloud had she dared, but Hiram was near, and in her present mood she could not meet him. So she stole back to the house by tortuous paths, and up to her own room, not to weep or moan, she was beyond all that now. She had sealed her own doom; she had none to blame but herself, there was the rub.

When she went down in the morning Athelstan had gone, leaving no message behind, and Tibbie Arbuthnot rightly concluded he had received his *song*.

"I did think," she said, confidentially to Paquita, "that Claire was unlike the rest of us, but I was a fool. See what money can do! Now I never did profess to love Dick, but I wouldn't change him for fifty Hiram with fifty times his income."

Before the day closed in Hiram sought Claire.

She turned her pale proud face upon him as he entered the room, and something in her eyes made him nervous, so that he stammered somewhat incoherently "he had come to tell his decision." Briefly, he loved her and would do as she wanted; if she would draw up a form of the deed she wished executed he would at once convey it to a lawyer and have everything settled satisfactorily.

She thanked him quietly, with no sign of exultation in her manner; she was not even grateful to him for she believed he was only giving her back a portion of her own.

The deed executed ran, that Hiram Fontaine, of Fontaine Abbey, Lilywold, in the county of B——, England, did hereby invest a certain sum for the sole benefit of the mother and sisters of his *fiancée*, Claire; the interest of which should amount to one thousand pounds annually. The same to be paid in quarterly instalments. The first on the day of his marriage with the said Claire. Said Claire's mother to have life interest

in the same, and at her decease her daughters to share equally to the exclusion of Claire.

When that parchment was given into her hand the girl grew ashen white, but Hiram confident now of his prize, said,—

"Well, it is my turn to speak now, and as I've been generous you'll hardly refuse my request which is that we get married without delay. Can we have the knot tied here?"

But Claire in her guilty heart was afraid lest a Scotch marriage might prove less binding, and refused to be married save at the Episcopalian church of the nearest town.

Then Tibbie had to be called in, and although loudly lamenting the loss of her companion, took such an interest in the affair that the date of the ceremony was quickly fixed.

It was to take place in a week; there was no need for delay, but oh, what a terribly short week that was to the reluctant bride, who could see nothing before her but sorrow and humiliation of her own working.

So, on a dreary November morning they were married; only Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot being present. Everything passed quietly by until the bride signed her name, when she wrote in a firm free hand, "Claire Herbert Fontaine," giving her father's name as "Gerard Fontaine, gentleman, late of Fontaine Abbey."

With a face the hue of death the bridegroom turned upon her.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, passionately.

With her eyes fixed upon his, she answered, in a low voice,—

"I can explain; do not make a scene here;" and as they drove away the clergyman watched them with curious pitiful eyes, wondering not a little what their story was.

So that they should attract no attention they had all driven together to the church, and in this fashion they had returned.

Once safely in the carriage Hiram, regardless of Tibbie and her husband, said,—

"Now, madam, out with it; *who and what* are you?"

"I am your cousin, Claire Herbert Fontaine; and I married you to revenge my father's honour and to supply my mother's needs," she said, defiantly.

A dead silence followed; Tibbie scarcely dared to breathe. Secretly Arbuthnot was admiring the courage of the cold, pale bride; then Hiram, with a fearful oath, cried,—

"You have cozened me into marriage, you have duped and deceived me!"

"You have your remedy," she said, quietly; "you can cast me adrift."

"That is what you desire; no, madam," he shrieked. "I have bought you, you are my goods, my chattels, and by Heaven I'll use you so that you shall repent this day and the first hour I entered your life!"

"I have repented all along; but may I remind you that mutual recriminations are not good form before our friends."

"Look here!" cried Tibbie, "say no more. You've got a wife you don't deserve, Hiram, and make up your mind to forgive and forget, and be happy."

He glared at her.

"Oh, yes; I shall be happy, *watching her suffer!*"

And so was this unholy marriage consummated.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, mother! mother! mother!" cried Olive, as she finished reading Claire's letter announcing her marriage, "she has done it for our sakes; and her unhappiness (for she *will* be unhappy), will always appear to be our working. I would have borne anything rather than she should so have sacrificed herself."

Mrs. Fountain said nothing except,—

"Do not let the child know all the truth. Oh, Claire, my beautiful Claire, if I had but known!"

But not all the lamenting and regretting in the world could undo that fatal step; and, for Elsie's sake they went abroad, having first learned

that Claire was going on a trip to America with her husband; he had utterly refused to travel with the Arbuthnots to Nice as had been arranged.

"No," he said, with satanic smile, "my wife and I need to become better acquainted with each other, the voyage will give us every opportunity;" and Tibbie, shaking her head, said sorrowfully, to Dick,—

"He will break her heart, the little wretch! Now, perhaps, you will allow I am a better judge of character than you."

"I do, my dear, and I wish with all my soul I had never seen the cad. I could wring his neck with the greatest pleasure. As for breaking Claire's heart, he *may*, but he will never bend her pride. Jove! what courage and diplomacy for a girl of eighteen to possess!"

Would Claire ever forget that awful voyage, or the still more awful wanderings to and fro? Hiram dragged her from place to place where his earlier days had been spent. He sought out his mother's relatives, whom he had not acknowledged since his accession to fortune, and vulgar as they were, compelled Claire to meet and receive them as equals, encouraging them in their coarse jests and wild orgies.

It was as though seven devils possessed him and each one had broken loose; and now she discovered that which hitherto she had not known, and which even his intimates had not suspected—in secret he was a confirmed drunkard.

It was terrible enough to endure this knowledge now, what would it be when they returned to England, for she dared not hope it could always be hidden.

Indeed, one cousin Josh, by name, had playfully informed her that Hiram had "seen snakes" on one occasion; and being asked the interpretation of this dark saying he replied,—

"Oh, you don't cotton to our lingo, cousin Claire; I mean he's had d's, in plain *language*, delirium tremens."

She could neither say nor do anything. She was his wife, "his goods and chattels," and being proud forbore to give voice to her wrongs.

She bore herself with quiet dignity; but her heart was like lead in her breast, and often in the long cruel nights, when Hiram lay in his drunken slumber, she would ask herself again and again,—

"Was I right? was I right? Can I long endure my life! Oh, Heaven, have mercy upon me and forgive!"

She had no money. Hiram was careful of that. He bought her sumptuous garments, costly jewels because he liked to parade his wealth before the world. He also liked to make her feel her utter dependence upon him. He knew it was gall and wormwood to her to be compelled to ask him to supply her needs.

He refused to allow any communication between her and her family; and as he always opened all correspondence before it came to her hands even to Tibbie she could not complain.

Surely the sin she had so consciously committed had brought with it its own punishment.

In May they returned to England and took up their residence for a while in town, where those who met young Mrs. Fontaine for the first time declared her the loveliest woman of the season; and those who had known her in her happier girlhood said,—

"How she was gone off! and who can wonder! She deserves to suffer, if only because her husband maligned her father and made beggars of her mother and sisters."

One night at a great dinner she met Athelstan, and the hostess, knowing nothing of the past, commissioned him to take her down. Tibbie was there, and looked frightened as Claire calmly placed her hand upon his arm, for she had seen a look of demoniacal hate on Hiram's face, and feared for the girl whom she loved as well as she could love any creature but herself.

One swift glance Claire gave into the stern, handsome face above; then she looked down, unable to bear the cold regard of the deep brown eyes.

"You must forgive me," Athelstan said in a low, icy voice. "I did not voluntarily thrust myself upon your notice; had I guessed you would be present I—"

"You would have remained away," she finished sadly. "I will be as little trouble to you as I can, Mr. Bayard, I may never have a chance of speaking with you again; let me ask you now to forgive me, and to assure you that you are avenged. I do not look like a happy woman, do I? But I deserve my punishment;" and then she said no more, nor did he reply; perhaps he could not.

Carefully he avoided her throughout the evening, leaving as early as he could, but early as he left Hiram had gone before, which was perhaps as well, he being scarcely sober.

On the arrival of her carriage the hostess went to Claire.

"Mr. Fontaine returned home in a cab an hour ago," she said, the pity she kept from her voice shining in her eyes, "he was somewhat indisposed, but not sufficiently so for you to be alarmed."

But Claire's heart sank even lower and lower as she drove homewards; a servant met her in the hall, taking her wraps, and then she went upstairs.

The room she entered was deserted. Casting herself in a chair she buried her face in her hands and gave herself up to bitter thoughts.

The slow opening of a door startled her. Looking up she saw her husband, and by his flushed face and glittering eyes she knew his condition.

With slow and stealthy step he advanced, then addressing her said,—

"Stand up!"

Without a word she obeyed, remaining before him a lovely liason figure clad in all the bravery of silk and jewels, whilst from beneath the crown of yellow hair her face gleamed white but undaunted.

With an opprobrious epithet he asked how she dared so much as to exchange a word with Bayard?

"The fault was not mine," she said coldly, "and even though I am your wife I cannot outstage all laws of etiquette by insulting a host's friend."

"You will consider me, madam; I am your world, your guide, your master. You don't care a fig for me, curse you, but by—you shall fear me!"

"I despise you too much to make fear possible," she said, stung by his tone.

There was a toy dagger upon a table near her; he snatched it up, and springing to her side, caught her by the nape of the neck, and drawing back her head, glared into her eyes, whilst he held the dagger to her throat.

"I'll murder you, if I sawing for it," he almost shrieked, "you white-faced devil. You shall learn what it is to outwit Hiram Fontaine."

She neither shrank nor stirred; the pale lips did not move; but her eyes as they met his wore no sign of fear, only they were full of contempt of him and herself. He was abashed, and flung her from him just as a frightened servant ran in crying,—

"Oh, sir, what would you do?"

Claire fell heavily to the floor, but in a moment she had risen again; and taking up the dagger which Hiram had flung aside, tested the point, smiled, returned it to the table, and still smiling in the same strange way, went to her room.

It seemed to her that all of good was slain in her; she almost wished that Hiram had carried out his threat, for then she would be at peace, and no matter what happened, her dear ones were saved from penury. She would not think of Athelstan; by her own act she had lost him, and now she was a wife—Heaven help her—a wife. In July they went to Lilywold, where no warm welcome awaited the once popular Claire; callers were few from the first, and when rumours got abroad of the wild orgies held at the Abbey, the kind of associates Hiram affected, even these ceased to come.

He had cast aside all restraint now; if he could not be respected he would be feared and wondered over. The servants were all creatures of his own, nothing that Claire did escaped notice or report; every action was spied upon, every letter was conveyed to Hiram, and every reply inspected by him before being consigned to the post bag.

Of her mother's movements she was absolutely ignorant, and it seemed to her at times that she must die of her loneliness and grief.

But pride sustained her; and there was no gracious influence to soften her hardening heart. At first Hiram insisted that she should sit at table with his disreputable companions, but her pale, proud presence was so great a check upon their merriment that he was soon glad to let her keep her rooms.

Many times now had his cowardly hand struck her, sometimes bruising the whiteness of the lovely defiant face; but she never cried out, neither did she attempt to hide the marks of ill usage. Once she said in a low voice as she wiped away the blood that trickled from her mouth,—

"Some day you will go too far," and there was an awful menace in her voice. Oh, poor Claire! poor, unhappy, misguided, rebellious Claire!

In September, Hiram was dangerously ill. All the county knew the nature of his malady, and why it took four strong men to pinion him to his bed. It was openly talked about, and some pity was even expressed for the young wife.

In the days of his convalescence he was very humble, begging her not to leave him, promising amendment, and praying the pardon he did not deserve, and she tried to answer dutifully although she had little belief in the reality of his repentance.

Nor were her doubts without foundation. When the fear of death was removed, and he was no longer dependent upon her for courage and gentle ministrations, he resumed the old line of conduct, and it seemed to Claire "his last state was worse than his first."

Thus matters stood when November came, and it was just a year since she became a wife. She was sitting in the morning thinking bitterly of all that might have been, yearning for some message from the dear ones for whose sake she had so fatally sacrificed herself, when Hiram entered demanding,—

"Why the d—she sat there like an owl in the dark?"

She rose at once and rang for lights. Then she saw he held a newspaper in his hand.

"This is our wedding day," he said with a brutal laugh, "and it ought to be celebrated in fine style, but as you don't care for company of my providing, I have brought you a surprise instead. Here is something to interest you." And, with a shaking finger, he pointed to a paragraph.

Her soul stood still with horror as slowly her mind grasped the meaning of these words:

"FONTAINE.—At Naples, October 31st, Elsie, youngest daughter of the late Mr. Gerard Fontaine, formerly of Fontaine Abbey, aged 14."

"Oh," she cried, "oh, Heaven! Hiram let me go to them; let me see her before she is hidden away. Elsie, my little Elsie! See, Hiram, I kneel to you! Oh, I don't care how hard all the future may be, if only you will grant my prayer. I will serve you. I will try, as Heaven sees my heart, to love you as good women love their husbands."

He burst into a coarse, brutal laugh.

"So you are humbled at last, my lady; you kneel to the man you despise! You had your day, this is mine; and I will take care you do not leave my roof either openly or secretly. You see Heaven itself fights for me! One of your cursed brood is gone. I shall live to laugh over the graves of all!"

CHAPTER VII.

SHE rose and staggered from the room, feeling her way like a blind woman. Looking herself in the only apartment she could call her own, she went to an open window and kneeling there tried to pray but could frame no prayer.

Elsie—her little, darling Elsie, was dead! And this was the result of her mighty wisdom, her mad fighting against Heaven and fate. She saw, as she had never before seen, the heinousness of her sin. She had vowed to bring her dear ones back to Fontaine and had failed. She had vowed to save Elsie from premature death, and had

failed again. She had stooped to trickery and deceit and all to no purpose.

In one sudden, terrible burst the tears came; and as for the first time in long, long months she wept unrestrainedly—the heart of the tempest-tossed woman became as the heart of a little child.

Elsie's death had done for her what all these awful months of shame and pain could not effect, and she was willing now to say, with all her soul,—

"I have erred and gone astray."

When she again saw Hiram, and he looked for added pride and resentment, it staggered him to find her so meek and gentle. It is true her meekness only moved his craven soul to further display of authority and brutality. But she kept firm control over herself, and would not sink into her old manner.

But she was most unhappy, not the less so because she had worked out all this misery for herself, and how she lived through the next few months she could not tell then or after.

In April, when all the world was putting on its loveliest garb, Hiram again succumbed to his excesses. It was then that Claire found means to communicate with her mother and Olive, then living in a little town in Surrey.

She had contrived to write a brief account of all that had happened to her since her marriage, and this, with great entreaty in her eyes, she begged the medical man to post. She flushed hotly as she added,—

"I must even tax your goodness so far as to frank it through. Mr. Fontaine has peculiar opinions as to a woman's capacity for—rightly using money."

"I will see to it," the doctor answered kindly, "pray do not trouble about the matter, and I want no thanks. Who remains with Mr. Fontaine tonight beside the butler and valet? You or Nurse Addison?"

"I do."

"Very well. I don't want two patients on my hands. Put on your things and take a brisk walk, otherwise I shall not allow you to sit up; you will break down."

"I will obey you," she said, gently, "because you are kind to me in my trouble."

So, whilst the sun was yet bright, she started for a long ramble. The air was soft and mild, and under the hedgerows the primroses were blowing. Claire stopped to gather a handful and then, alarmed to find it so late, hurried homewards.

As she drew near the Abbey her heart stood still with fear, for there on the broad window-sill, clad only in his bed clothes, was Hiram—afterwards it transpired that his valet, believing him asleep, had left him for a few moments.

He stood gesticulating for a few moments, and then, with a wild shriek, flung out his arms and leaped into the air. There followed a sickening thud. Servants rushed out, and Claire, recovering power of movement, rushed forward. There he lay white and still, rigid as a dead man; but he was not dead, neither were any bones broken.

Afterwards, when the doctor arrived and had made careful examination, he said that even the internal injuries were slight, although the shock to the system was so great that, having regard to the patient's mode of life, he must entreat Mrs. Fontaine to be prepared for the worst.

Still and white she stood a moment, then she said in an awe-struck tone,—

"But, doctor, cannot you say he will recover consciousness? If he were to die thus it would be so terrible."

"I think you may hope," he said, as he took his leave.

Two days and nights Hiram lay motionless and unconscious; on the third morning when he opened his eyes the light of reason was in them, and he said feebly to the doctor who stood by,—

"Am I very bad?—How long will you take to pull me through?"

Then something in the other's face filled him with fear, and he cried,—

"I'm not going to die! Don't tell me that, I won't. I daren't! You can save me if you like. Send for a physician—a dozen, if you will. Anything—anything rather than let me go."

"It would be wrong to deceive you, Mr. Fontaine, you are beyond man's help. If you have any business to do, any last bequest to make," but here he was interrupted by the shrieks and ravings of the patient, and not because she doubted the doctor's skill but to pacify this poor craven soul, Claire telegraphed for two of the first physicians of the day. They came promptly, but they only endorsed the doctor's opinion, and when this was told Hiram he struggled no more with the inevitable, but gave himself to tears and moanings.

He would not allow Claire to leave him; it seemed to soothe him just to hold her fingers in his feeble clasp, and as he looked on her changed beauty, seeing the havoc he had wrought upon her, his heart smote him remorsefully.

"I've been a brute to you," he said, "but I was so riled to think you had outwitted me, and I hated you all, because I felt you were different to me. But p'raps I should not have been so hard, if you'd have cared ever so little for me. I couldn't frighten you either, but I was often scared when you looked at me with your great, scornful eyes—I made you suffer, ain't you glad to see me suffer in my turn?"

"Indeed no," she answered, gently, "I would help you if I could."

He looked at her wonderingly.

"Ah, you're a sight nobler than me; and you can help me—promise to stay with me—to this last."

She promised, and then he, summoning all his courage to the fore, said,—

"We had best send for Swainson; I ought to make a will."

"Do not vex yourself with such matters; there are other things of more vital importance."

But he insisted.

"I know, I know! but there might be some dispute when I am gone; they're a queer lot over the water, and no doubt would think they ought to share my fortune—but they shan't touch a farthing. There's your father's will, it was a just one, so much for your mother, so much for each girl. Well, I'll model him on that—you'll get your own back after all. Send for Swainson at once—and—and—you don't ought to be all alone—when it comes—have your mother and Olive down," and this was the first act of grace in all that graceless life.

The will was duly drawn up and attested, and Hiram seemed comforted, he almost believed that by this deed, he had wiped out all the past. When Mr. Swainson was gone he said,—

"I wish you would pray for me, Claire."

She knelt down beside him, but she could frame no petition; her lips for so long had been unaccustomed to prayer—but when he urged again "pray," she covered her eyes with her trembling hands, and repeated the Lord's prayer, he feebly following.

That was his last conscious interval; afterwards, he gradually sank into a comatose state, and when Mrs. Fontaine and Olive arrived he was practically dead. Of the meeting between mother and sisters let silence hold her own—it was sacred to themselves, but when each had grown calmer, Mrs. Fontaine accompanied Claire to the sick-room, and together they kept watch, while the sands of life were slowly ebbing. At the break of day, the great change came.

"Claire," said the mother, with a glance at the ashen face upon the pillow, "it is over now."

She rose with a choking sob and flung herself upon her mother's breast.

CHAPTER VIII.

A YEAR had gone by; Mrs. Fontaine and Olive were in town, but although the time of mourning demanded by etiquette had passed, Claire remained at Fontaine Abbey alone. She had won for herself golden opinions from the poor and reinstatement in the county favour, for Olive, intent upon doing justice to her beautiful sister, had not failed to make the real reasons for her marriage known, and even those who condemned the action, pitied the actor.

She led a solitary life; for all her youth and

beauty she was beyond hope, and her heart lay numb within her. She heard sometimes in a casual way of Athelstan, but of him she scarcely dared to think, he was becoming known in the legal world, and had several times been favourably noticed by the press. But of course he had ceased to care for her, or he would have given some sign.

"I deserve that he should hate and despise me," she said bitterly to herself, "he can never forgive my sin against him—but it is very hard."

Athelstan Bayard too had heard her story, and half-doubting, half believing thought,—

"When we were poor together she spurned me; it is extremely unlikely that now she is in possession of the wealth for which she sold herself that she should stoop to me," and so he refrained from approaching her in any way, and ate out his heart in bitter yearning and passionate love.

It was a bright May morning when a letter from Olive reached the young widow as she sat alone; after some desultory chat the girl wrote,—

"I have news for you of Athelstan Bayard; I am sure he will have your sympathy in the trial which has come to him. It appears that two months ago he became bond for a friend to the tune of a thousand pounds; well, the friend has absconded, and Mr. Bayard is called upon for the sum in full—to be paid in the course of ten days. He has contrived in the last two years to save a small sum, but it will not meet his requirements, and unless some good Samaritan comes forward he will be ruined. Is it not hard?" and then that artful little puss said no more, leaving her few words to do their work and win back happiness to her sister and her favourite Athelstan, if indeed that were possible.

Very white and thoughtful sat Claire, recalling all the past, and wondering in her trembling heart if she dared offer help to this man she still so dearly loved.

If she enclosed notes to him he would return them. If she sent them anonymously he would probably guess from whence they came, and thrust them back upon her. No, if she would succeed, she must go to him with pleading voice and earnest eyes. If he saw her, if he listened, he might recall the past, and for that past's sake be moved to mercy and compliance.

She lost no time in making preparations for her journey, and, catching the express, arrived in town about noon.

She never stayed to reflect what judgment the world would pass upon her conduct, she only remembered that he was in trouble and that she could help him.

She found his chambers with very little difficulty, and mounting the stairs with fast-beating heart and all her courage failing, she paused outside his door.

Inside sat Athelstan, his head in his hands, for indeed he saw but a very dreary prospect before him, and to one so ambitious and proud as he, this downfall was most bitter.

Of late he had sometimes thought to humble his pride and plead once more with Claire. Now that could never be, and he knew that no other woman could ever fill the place she held in his heart.

In the midst of his broodings a timid knock sounded at the door. "Come in," he said, impatiently. The handle was gently turned, and there pale and frightened stood Claire herself, her beautiful eyes full of deprecation and entreaty.

He started to his feet with a hasty exclamation, but quickly recovering herself bowed profoundly, begging courteously to know how he could serve her; and still with that same frigid courtesy he placed a chair for her, but she remained standing, and he felt rather than saw that she was trembling very much.

In her hand she held a little packet with which she toyed nervously, and she was long before she could control herself sufficiently to speak. It did not help her that he stood so close, regarding her with cold eyes and set lips; and at last she spoke through utter desperation, and that coherently.

"I heard but this morning that you are in trouble, and I came at once to beg you to let me

help you. I owe you much reparation. Nothing I can do will ever make the atonement ample; but, but at least for the sake of the past, do not deny me this privilege. You would not if you knew how my heart is set upon it. Oh! be more generous to me than I was to you; see, I have more than I need, out of my plenty let me help you, Athelstan!"

She lifted appealing eyes to his stern face.

"You ask an impossibility," he said, "and why do you ask it? You cannot care what befalls me!"

"But I do care," passionately; "it would break my heart to know you were ruined."

His firm mouth trembled; but that she did not see, for now she had spoken so frankly she dared not look at him.

"How can I believe you?" he asked. "Once you confessed you loved me. In less than two days you gave practical denial to your words. You sent me away because I was poor. Now that I am sunk still deeper in poverty you would insult me by your gifts."

"Oh, no! no! Athelstan, if you think thus, I have changed you indeed. I have suffered more than you can tell, not more than I deserved; but it was not just for money's sake I sinned, think as poorly of me as you will, only give me the blessed privilege of helping you. I ask no more, I hope no more; and then some day, when you have grown rich and famous, you will perhaps remember me with pity and with kindness. I ask you on my knees not to send me away despairing, not to revenge yourself now upon me; and then before he could prevent her she had fallen on her knees, and, with clasped hands, was praying him wildly to accept the notes she had brought.

She could not see through her blinding tears how deeply moved he was, only she felt him take her hands and slowly raise her from her lowly position, whilst his voice, grown tender and shaken by emotion, said,—

"Claire, don't you know I could only take such a gift from my wife? or the woman I hoped to call wife?"

"Once," she sobbed, "I was all but your affianced; you should not be proud with me."

"Claire," and now she heard something in his voice which brought hope to her heart, light to her eyes, colour to her pale cheeks. "Claire, I am bankrupt in all but honour; and the world judges poor men who woo rich women harshly; but I care nothing for that so long as you believe I love you as I always loved you, for yourself alone! If you dare lay your hands in mine and with them give your life into my keeping I will accept your help; but you must do this out of love, not pity, my darling! my darling! let me look into your face that shall tell me all the truth."

As he stooped to her she put her arms about his neck.

"I have loved you all the while. It nearly broke my heart to send you away; but I thought then I was acting nobly. I was proud of my courage and self-sacrifice—now that I have grown wiser I can only reproach myself—oh, I wonder if with all your heart you can say 'I forgive you Claire!'"

"Nothing is too hard for love to pardon. Kiss me, my beloved, and just for to-day let us forget all that is dark and unpleasant. Let me take you now to your mother. If only because the roses have returned to your cheeks she should look on me with a favourable eye, although I am a poor bargain."

"You are all the world to me. Oh, thank Heaven with me for our happiness!"

[THE END.]

In the Sandwich Islands the apple has become wild, and forests of trees of many acres are found in various parts of the country. They extend from the level of the sea far up into the mountain sides. It is said that miles of these apple forests can occasionally be seen. One traveller gives the extent of one of them as between five and ten miles in width and about twenty miles long.

BELLRINGING.

The bellringer is one who works for the love of his art, and he has few admirers. This, however, troubles him very little so long as he can excite the admiration of his fellow-ringers.

But it is not the sound of the bells that charms the ringer so much as the pulling of them. To ring "changes" is to the bellringer a most fascinating and interesting recreation, and if the unfortunate people who are merely listeners understood the various "methods" and could follow what was going on in the tower they would not condemn the art of bellringing quite so strongly as they do now.

It would be impossible to give the slightest outline of the study of change-ringing here, and it must, therefore, suffice to say that there are various methods of changing the bells, all of which require a large amount of study. The most common method is that called "grandire," and it is to the ringing of a "peal" of this kind that the young ringer first aspires.

A "peal" of "grandire triples" consists of 5,040 changes, and is rung on eight bells, seven of which change, with the tenor "in behind"—i.e., ringing at the end of each change. On an average peal of bells this takes about three hours, and great are the preparations when a band enters upon this formidable task. Slippers are substituted for boots; coats, collars, and ties are thrown aside, and everything done to free the limbs of the ringers. If the peal "breaks down," by some member ringing out of place, the whole company have to start again.

But sometimes a mistake is made near the end of the peal, and time will not permit a re-commencement, and then it is that the delinquent receives the censure of his companions, robbed of their glory by the single error of one unfortunate member.

When a company succeeds, an announcement of the fact is published in the weekly paper devoted to their art, with a list of the names of those who took part. In addition to this, a "peal board," on which the names are elaborately painted, is erected in the belfry, and which is looked upon by every ringer who visits the tower with awe and respect.

It is a common practice for companies to form to tour round the country ringing at all the churches available, in order, if possible, to make a record of peals. In this manner, companies have been known to ring two and even three peals a day, which, each peal taking three hours, would necessitate nine hours' ringing.

This fact is sufficient to show that bellringing does not require such a large amount of physical strength as some imagine. The tenor bell, in most churches, is the only one that requires two men to manipulate it.

ROSES.

THERE is a good deal of folklore connected with roses. Wilsford, in his "Nature's Secrets," says that "when roses or violets flourish in autumn, it is an evil sign of an ensuing plague the year following, or some pestiferous disease." A writer in the *Connoisseur*, after describing the well-known Midsummer Eve love-charm connected with the orpine, goes on to say: "Our maid Betty tells me that if I go backward, without speaking a word, into the garden, upon Midsummer Eve, and gather a rose, and keep it in a clean sheet of paper without looking at it till Christmas Day, it will be as fresh as June, and if I then stick it in my bosom, he that is to be my husband will come and take it out." It is probably to this charm that Herrick refers in the "Hesperides," when he says, speaking of a bride:

"She must no more a-maying,
Or by rosebuds divine
Who'll be her Valentine."

In Thuringia the rose hold a similar position as a love-charm; a maid who has several lovers will name a rose leaf after each, and then scatter them upon the water, that which sinks the last represents the future husband. In some parts of Germany it is customary to throw rose leaves on a coal fire as a means of insuring good luck.

In Germany, as well as in France and Italy, it is believed that if a drop of one's blood is buried under a rose tree, it will insure rosy cheeks. The rose is also associated in Wexphalia with a charm against nose-bleeding and other hemorrhages. This charm consists in the repetition of the words, "In Christ's garden stand three roses—one for the good God, the other for God's blood, and the third for the angel Gabriel: blood, I pray you, cease to flow." In Suabia it is somewhat different: "On our Lord's grave spring three roses; the first is Hope, the second is Patience, the third is the will of God: blood, I pray you, be still."

CHOLERA.

At the next cholera congress in Europe, attention might surely be turned to the Musselman habit of bringing Zem-zem, or sacred water, polluted by sewage, into countries anxious to avoid cholera. All such water should be confiscated. Pilgrims bring back bottles of this water for their friends, exactly as Europeans collect water of the Jordan for their untravelled neighbours. This Jordan water is sometimes used at royal christenings in England, where it is quite harmless; but the pious Turk or Egyptian is liable to keep the Zem-zem water as a precious cordial for use during illness or to break his fast at the end of the trying month of Ramadan, when the bottled-up germs would be specially liable to prey upon his exhausted interior. In September there was a case suspiciously like true cholera in one of the outlying parts of Cairo; but as careful search failed to find any comma bacilli, the death was declared not to be due to cholera. The patient died forty-eight hours after being attacked. The medical men seeing the case, who had had a previous experience of cholera, believed that it was not the real disease, but suspicion was created by finding that in the same house there were pilgrims who had returned to Cairo from Mecca only four days before. Moreover, the effects of these pilgrims included Zem-zem water, dates from the Hedjaz, and the clothing and other property of another pilgrim who had died from cholera in the holy places. It is needless to say that the precautions taken were of the most careful kind. The house and its cesspool were cleaned, disinfected and whitewashed, as many things as possible were burnt, and the people of the house were kept under observation in a tent in the desert for several days.

A WOMAN'S TRIUMPH.

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CHAPTER XV.

THOROLD was both shocked and grieved to see how ill Lady Patricia was. He took her down to dinner, and for the first time since his great disappointment the bitterness and the pain grew less in his heart, his mind ceased to occupy itself only with the one subject which had engrossed it so entirely eating into his manhood's courage and strength, and almost breaking down his honest determination to struggle on with his life that was now so dull and dead a thing.

It had been the remembrance of Patricia's words, that strange earnest request, which had surprised and touched him so much when first he had heard it, that was his strongest help in his hour of bewildered disappointment and pain, —not an individual remembrance of the girl; not a remembrance born of those soft, tender thoughts which circulate in a man's heart when connected with a woman who is dear to him; but a simple, gentle, remembrance of the truth and goodness that had lain in the words, a sorrowful recollection of the dead mother who would have grieved so much in his pain, and who would have suffered so much in seeing him lapse into a moody and embittered man.

This was the strongest influence that had hung about the words Patricia had uttered. She had entreated him for his mother's sake, and when his disappointment was greatest Thorold recalled these words and found a faint consolation in so doing.

For his mother's sake he roused himself; for the sake of the beloved dead he struggled with his sorrow and broken hopes; for his mother's memory he stood up bravely, and went on with his work, doing all that was required of him, not in the bright, buoyant, joyous fashion of the last few weeks, but in a steady, sombre way that spoke eloquently of determination and of strength, but not of ambition or of hope.

To-night as he sat beside Patricia at Lady Agnes' most dainty dinner table, Thorold had a new sensation. He had forgotten the girl almost altogether. Patricia's words had remained, but they had grown into a part of his memory for his mother; Patricia herself had faded utterly from his mind.

Her wan look, her extreme delicacy, and the atmosphere of gentle sorrow that hung over her, sent a pang of something like reproach and regret through Thorold's heart. He felt all at once as if he had been guilty of neglect and ingratitude. The beauty and sweetness of the girl's nature was revealed to him for the first time.

He had always liked her, though had he been asked to give a description of Patricia de Burgh he would have been completely at a loss to do so, and when she had flashed into his memory, he had given a gentle thought to her—but it was not until to-night that Patricia's real self became known to him.

He found himself listening to her low, charming voice with the greatest pleasure. He was amazed to find how easily and how well the girl held her own in the conversation that circled round the table. Patricia did not say very much, it was true, but whenever she was addressed (and Thorold noticed that her uncle, Mr. Blanquerville, turned very frequently to the girl) she had something of interest and value to say.

There was a little indefinite change in Patricia this evening that did not escape her aunt's kind anxious eyes.

The girl seemed far brighter and better than Lady Agnes had found her during the day. There was a soft touch of colour on the pale, olive-tinted cheeks, and a light gleamed out of the big dark eyes.

"She only wanted to be taken away from that horrid old house, and that selfish old woman. I wonder Constance could have had the heart to send the child to Aunt Susan's at all. The very look of the house is enough to make anybody ill. Thank goodness Maxton wrote to me! I verily believe if Patricia had been left there another month she would have gone out of the world altogether. I am enchanted to see her looking so much better. Ah! once down with us in Leamshire, we shall soon see a very different state of things."

Patricia did not talk very much to Thorold. She was conscious of a feeling of intense consolation in the realization of his near presence, and it was long since her young heart had beat so gladly as it did to-night, after hearing him utter that grave quiet statement.

She took surreptitious glances at him now and then, and a little pang always followed on the glance; for there was such a great, such a marked difference in the young man's face. It was almost impossible to realize that he was one with that bright boyish-looking being whose whole person seemed to be bathed in the sunshine of hope and joy only a few short weeks before.

This was sorrowful to Patricia to own—most sorrowful when she remembered the cause—that a woman's wanton vanity had worked this change; a woman's selfish cruelty had played carelessly with so great a treasure as this man's honest love—a woman who was now none other than her beloved brother's wife, mistress of his honour and of his home.

By a sort of unspoken bond neither Patricia nor Thorold uttered a word about Lord and Lady Settrefield. The subject of the marriage cropped up during dinner, and Miriam's most unusual beauty came in for its usual share of admiration.

Patricia did not dare look at Thorold while this was passing; she felt that he had winced, and she was quite sure that his face had grown a shade paler. She breathed like one relieved from a heavy burden when the conversation

drifted away from the Settefeld marriage to other things.

Afterwards, upstairs in the drawing-room, however, Patricia had to listen to more praise of Miriam and to undergo a certain amount of questioning. She answered as well as she could.

Never from her, by word or sigh, should the world gather that her brother's choice was not agreeable to her. Never, so long as she had the strength to hide it, should the world know of the rupture which lived between her dear loved brother and herself.

Lady Agnes, in fact, knew far more about the newly-married couple than Patricia did.

"You must look to me for all news," she cried to her eager curious feminine guests. "Patricia has been living out of the world. I had to go like a knight of old and rescue her. I don't believe that a sound of daily life penetrated to your prison, did it, Pat, my darling? no newspapers or anything; and then one knows just how much to expect from brides and bridegrooms; they write only because they must do so, but for all the news they give they might just as well be silent. However," Lady Agnes went on lightly; perhaps the older woman's kind heart had defined a little of the suffering that lived in Patricia's, anyhow she figuratively ranged herself on her niece's side, and ward off attacks. "However, I am in the position to give you a little information. Settefeld and his wife will not be in England for Christmas, but immediately after the new year they will return home and go to Belton Towers, where I expect they will remain until they come to town for the season."

"I don't know Lady Settefeld even by sight," remarked one of the guests as there was a pause in the conversation. "But I have the pleasure of an acquaintance with her mother, a most sweet woman. She seldom leaves her country home, but she is loved by all who know her. If her daughter is only half as sweet as the mother, Lord Settefeld is to be congratulated on having won a delightful wife."

Patricia sighed wistfully to herself; her heart could not fail to respond to all that was said of Lady Stapleton, for she had instantly grasped the true goodness of Miriam's mother. How she longed to be able to have the same soft feelings for Miriam. She moved a little impatiently as she stood apart. Sometimes the thought came to her that she was unjust, ungenerous to Miriam, that she was condemning without a cause. Yet try as she would Patricia could not bring herself to think differently, and if she had failed to do so earlier when she had nothing but her own vague intuition to work upon, how much more did her doubts and mistrust quicken when she recalled Thorold Musgrove, and Miriam's most unworthy conduct where he was concerned?

She was fated to hear constant mention of her new sister-in-law's name, which, considering the circumstances, was more than natural.

Each person supposed, of course, that no subject could be so interesting to Lady Patricia as discussion about her brother's marriage. The world knew nothing of her secret. Jealous, envious tongues, of course, talked raspingly of Miriam's sharpness in having after all caught her fish when it had so nearly escaped her; but the majority of people were only concerned in noting and discussing a marriage which had an element of romance in it, and was decidedly more interesting than most of the marriages that took place every day.

Miriam's reputation as a beauty, and Settefeld's high place in the world made them objects of comment and gossip.

When the men came up from dinner Neville Blaneville drew a chair close to Patricia and began chatting with her.

He was one of the men who admired her exceedingly. He was wont to declare that Lady Patricia de Burgh was one of the most attractive girls he had ever met.

He fell into easy conversation with her, and very naturally he began to talk of the newly-married couple.

"I met Lady Settefeld in Russia a couple of years ago, it may be longer than that—yes, it

must be nearly three. I was attached to the Embassy there for a short time, and we were all madly in love with la belle blonde! She must have been quite a school girl in reality, but there was nothing 'gauche' or awkward about her. I knew quite half-a-dozen men who would have given their heads to have married her. I was not surprised to hear that Settefeld had fallen in love, she is very lovely!"

"Very," Lady Patricia said gently. She was listening to this chatter only vaguely; her thoughts and her eyes were fixed on Thorold, who was sitting talking earnestly to her aunt. Patricia seemed to feel intuitively that she was the subject of that earnest conversation, and her cheeks grew faintly rosy and her heart had a little thrill which was not comprehensible to her as this thought came.

The man beside her went on discussing Miriam in a casual sort of way.

"I remember there was a chap out in St. Petersburg at that time who was simply a raving maniac about Miss Stapleton. He was a handsome, weak fellow; can't recollect his name, but he had heaps of money, and he knew how to spend it. I used to hear such stories of his extravagance. He bombarded Miss Stapleton's apartment with flowers, and they said he made her the most magnificent gifts of jewels, which, to her credit be it said, I believe she never accepted. He was a wild, harum scarum sort of boy, and I heard a little while after he got mixed up in some Nihilistic scrape which cost him his life. Miss Stapleton was well rid of such an erratic admirer!"

Patricia found herself frowning slightly; she was conscious, too, of a jarred sensation as she listened to this chatty account of Miriam's success. It hurt her, without her understanding exactly why, for Mr. Blaneville's manner was full of courteous admiration for her sister-in-law.

Unconsciously, however, Patricia found herself giving out some measure of pity for the "harum scarum sort of a boy" who had evidently lost his heart so entirely to Miriam's beauty.

Who knew whether the same sort of amusement had not been played with him as with Thorold?

Patricia hated herself for such harsh thoughts, still they would come.

She forced herself to answer her companion.

"I never heard before that Miriam had been to Russia, though I believe some did tell me that she and her aunt had travelled all over Europe before settling in London. I should like to go to Russia," Patricia added, hoping to divert the conversation away from her brother and his wife.

"The society is charming, the life beautiful for the rich, but for the rest"—the man shrugged his shoulders—"the less said the better. I am not soft-hearted, as a rule, but I saw enough misery in my journeyings through Russia to bring tears to my eyes when I remember it."

"How terrible!" the girl sighed, her illimitable sympathy immediately touched; and then, at this moment, Lady Agnes came across the room.

"I am pleased to say I have successfully persuaded Mr. Musgrove to come down and spend Christmas with us. I like him so much. As a rule my dear George's swans turn out to be such extremely ordinary fowls, but this time his praise has been well bestowed."

"He looks a very intelligent man," Mr. Blaneville observed, turning his own keen eyes upon Thorold's big, stalwart figure. "What is he?"

"A civil engineer," Lady Agnes replied; and, as she did so, Neville Blaneville became instantly interested.

"And his name is Musgrove, you say? By Jove! he must be the young Musgrove who has done such marvellous work for Langton and Langton. He is a genius, my dear Aunt Agnes. I must go and speak to him. Please excuse me, Lady Patricia, I shall return in a moment."

"When you do, you won't find her here. I am just going to pack her off to bed. Oh yes, I am, Patricia," as the girl made a little laughing gesture. "You are an invalid, and you are under my charge. I am going to get you well, whether

you like it or not. So no mutiny, my dear, but just make up your mind to obey me without a murmur!"

Patricia rose with a smile and a little blush, but there was something like a mist of tears in her eyes.

Her aunt's tenderness was very sweet to her, but after her long starvation for want of love—after hungering, as she had done and did still, for the consoling knowledge of her brother's renewed sympathy and affection, any gentleness upset her.

She said "Good-night" to all, in her own proudly graceful way, and as her slender, white-robed figure disappeared through the door, each one present felt that the charm of the evening was gone with her.

"She is so sweet, I call her a lovely girl!" one of the ladies said with a little sigh, "but, dear Lady Agnes, I am grieved to see how delicate she has grown. Are you wise to keep her in England through the long trying winter? I confess if my girl looked as frail as Lady Patricia does, I should never rest till I had sent her away to a warmer climate."

Thorold found his brows drawn together in the knit fashion which was always significant with him of mental trouble or suffering. Patricia's delicacy had shocked him greatly, but it hurt him more to hear it discussed in this manner. Lady Agnes's bright brisk manner gave him a sudden sensation of relief and gladness.

"Oh, Pat will be as right as possible once she has been looked after and coddled up a bit," was Lady Agnes's reply. "The fact is," she added, "Patricia has fretted a little over the two marriages; she clings to her own people most tenderly, and, we must admit, to lose one's mother and brother both at the same time, is a little disturbing."

"But marriage does not necessarily mean a loss, dear Lady Agnes."

Lady Agnes looked a little quizzical.

"Doesn't it? I have my own ideas on that subject; at any rate I know what I am talking about when I discuss Patricia. Everyone knows her devotion to Settefeld. They were more like great friends than brother and sister. Now that he has fallen in love and married a wife, naturally Patricia must be put on one side. She is the sweetest creature in all the world, and no one rejoices as she does in her brother's happiness; but after all she is human, and she must be allowed her own little feelings in the matter."

"Of course she must," Neville Blaneville said warmly.

Later on he found himself standing in the hall with Thorold. Both young men had been assisted into their overcoats.

"Are you walking? Shall we go together?" Mr. Blaneville suggested, and Thorold assented at once. A little while ago he would have done so in a bright, sunny sort of way, now he did everything gravely, quietly.

His mood was a little more grave than usual; remembrance of Patricia remained and hurt him. He wondered vaguely if her aunt's definition of her condition were the true one; the subdued, sad air that hung about the girl seemed to come from a deeper, a more intense trouble than that which Lady Agnes had explained so cheerily.

"Charming woman, that!" Neville Blaneville said warmly, as they walked briskly through the cold and deserted streets. "I always chaff my uncle and tell him I am deeply in love with his wife. He adores her, and she is such a good sort—a thousand times better than her sister, though of course the Duchess of Millerois is far her superior in beauty. I suppose you admire her, like all the rest of the world?"

"I have never seen her," Thorold answered.

"Ah! then of course you cannot quite understand my ravings. She is a magnificent woman, Lady Agnes is a little like her, but her daughter not in the very least. Lady Patricia is a true Settefeld, so is her brother; handsome chap, Danvers, and as good as he looks."

"I have met Lord Settefeld, I liked him."

Thorold felt he was talking like an automaton, but it was so difficult for him to discuss anything which even approached Miriam. He was still

stiff and sore, metaphorically speaking, from the effects of the violent blow that had fallen upon him and his hopes.

He had hardly as yet conquered himself enough to criticise Miriam's conduct. He shirked thinking of her all in his power, for he feared to do so, poor fellow.

He knew that though hope had been cut from him so cruelly, so absolutely, life still lingered in the plant of love that had spread its fibres and tendrils so deep, so thick about his heart.

He made no excuses for Miriam, neither did he condemn her. He was only just recovering from the bewilderment of his most unexpected disappointment.

To-night was the first time he had been brought into direct contact with the question of the Settefeld marriage; on the whole Thorold's feelings were more tinged with surprise at his own bearing than at pain at what he had to bear.

He would, of course, have preferred not to discuss the matter, but since it was impossible to avoid it he met it as calmly as he could.

His honesty made him give that answer about Lord Settefeld. He had liked him, liked him very much despite the fact that Miriam's strange words of hatred for the Earl had unconsciously prejudiced him against the man. And now, even though it was Settefeld who had robbed him of all that had made his life so beautiful, Thorold could not say anything but the truth.

He had liked Settefeld, he felt in a vague chaotic sort of way he liked him still.

Mr. Blanquerville lit a cigarette.

"No one could help liking Settefeld," he said warmly and confidently; "he is one of the best fellows I have ever met, and I have met a good many. To a man like yourself, too, I am sure Settefeld must have enormous attraction; he is brimful of cleverness. I always regret he had no opportunity of building a place for himself in the world; he would have done it so worthily." They walked in silence for a few moments, and then Blanquerville spoke again. "I confess to being a little disappointed in his marriage," he said unsmilingly.

Thorold started and turned first very hot and then very cold.

"Lady Settefeld is—very beautiful," he said, and his pulses thrilled as they always did when Miriam's entrancing loveliness rose before him.

"Oh, yes! *Quant à ça*, Settefeld could hardly hope for anything better—still I don't quite see a wife such as he will need in the lovely Miriam; she is a butterfly, a gorgeous golden butterfly, with as little brain, and as little heart as a butterfly may be said to possess. I have had a good opportunity of gauging her character, and I must say I fear she will not prove a very successful wife to Settefeld."

Thorold made no answer. He was conscious of so many conflicting emotions, anger against the man who spoke, doubt, a fear that he was right, a distant veiled sort of sympathy for Lord Settefeld, a much more pronounced one for Patricia. He found himself speaking unconsciously.

"Let us hope you may be wrong. I can conceive nothing more terrible than disappointment and disillusionment after marriage."

He shivered as he spoke. A new light seemed opened out to him. This horrible thing which he had just touched, it might have come to him. He might have known the most supreme joy only to have it torn from him in this ruthless fashion. The thought seemed to check his breathing.

Neville Blanquerville laughed cynically.

"A terrible thing, which is nevertheless a common place," he said; "if disillusionment does come to Settefeld, he will at least have the satisfaction of knowing he suffers with most of his fellow creatures."

They had walked into Piccadilly at this point; it was not Thorold's route, but he had gone with Mr. Blanquerville willingly. He was glad of any excuse that kept him from his bed. Thought came so much more bitterly in the silence and loneliness of the night.

A man came towards them begging as they turned the corner of Park-lane. Mr. Blanquerville put his hand into his pocket and tossed a

sixpence to the man carelessly. Then as the beggar, a youngish-looking man, moved rapidly away, Thorold's companion came to a standstill and looked after him.

"What a rum thing!" he exclaimed.

"I have not set eyes on that man for three years. He used to look very different then to what he does now. He was as trim and smart and as extravagant as his master. I was telling you about him—no, by the way, it was to Lady Patricia I was talking about young Lindsey. I couldn't remember his name either, by the way, and his doings in St. Petersburg. I wish I had stopped that chap," Blanquerville said, as they resumed their walk.

"I should like to have known the rights about poor Lindsey; there were all sorts of rumours, but no one seemed to know the truth, except that he had got into trouble with the Russian police, and was reported to have been shot. Ah! it's a funny world, Musgrove—a funny world. Will you come in here?" he stopped before a smart club.

"No! Well we shall meet again before long. I hope; in any case we shall be fellow sojourners at Lady Agnes' dear comfortable old house at Christmas, and that is close upon us now. Good-night once again."

The two men clasped hands, and Thorold walked briskly away.

Blanquerville, left to himself, strolled leisurely into his club.

"A funny world," he said again in his thoughts, "and not altogether a satisfactory one—at least I fear that is the impression that will come to Settefeld one of these fine days. What in Heaven's name can have induced him to lose his head over this woman? It seems to me she carries her true character written in large letters all over her. The sister has gauged her anyhow. How she winced, poor child, when I spoke as I did. Thank Heaven I pulled myself up in time. The little scandals about 'La belle blonde' girl, as she was when she was at St. Petersburg, would not be palatable to Patricia de Burgh's pure proud mind. Well, the deed is done, and Settefeld's fate is settled. We can only hope nothing will come along to upset his dream of happiness—a consummation that will be denied him, I fear, since he has chosen to link his life to a woman, who possesses every qualification for making him miserable!"

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY AGNES' prophecy was remarkably well fulfilled. Once settled down in her aunt's warm comfortable and cheery country house, Patricia began to look another creature. Her cough was less assertive, and a little plumpness seemed to be creeping over her too slender young form.

There was perhaps another reason for this improvement. Whether owing to her aunt's doing or not, Patricia, of course, could not say, but just before Christmas a letter reached her from her brother, a letter written almost in his old tender strain, expressing deep concern for her ill-health, and never once alluding to the grievous cause of quarrel that had set them so far apart. Only at the end of the letter the Earl made mention of his wife.

"Miriam begs me to convey her sincere sympathy in your illness, and trusts earnestly you will soon be quite well again."

The girl's heart yearned over her brother when this letter came. Although she knew its arrival was not the outcome of spontaneous thought, yet she was greatly touched at getting it.

"I suppose you wrote to Danvers that I was ill, Aunt Agnes?" she said, when she had read it through many times.

"Certainly I did," was Lady Agnes' most prompt reply. "I considered Danvers ought to know; and I wrote to Constance also. I have been expecting an answer every day, but I suppose she is moving about from place to place and very likely she has not even received my letter at all."

Patricia smiled faintly.

"Very likely," was all she said.

She knew by this time how much she might expect from her mother.

The Duchess de Milleries had not even sent a word, as yet, to her daughter. Her husband had written a charging note, but Patricia's mother seemed to have forgotten her child altogether, greatly to Maxton's wrath.

"I call it downright shameful, that I do!" the faithful maid declared to herself. "But there, one oughtn't to be much surprised; her ladyship—I mean her grace—never did think of nothing nor nobody but herself. My dear young lady may just say good-bye to her mother for all the care or thought she's likely to get. Thank goodness everybody ain't like the Duchess. I must say I just love Lady Agnes for her goodness to the poor dear child. It do my 'eart good to see how well she begins to look again. She shan't never go anigh that horrid old woman in Bloomsbury again, not while I'm here to stop it."

They were peaceful and almost happy days that Patricia spent in the week that preceded Christmas. The house was to be full of guests for the festive season, and Patricia found plenty of work for her hands and brains. Though her aunt's husband was a prominent man in his profession, he was by no means wealthy; at least taking into consideration the position he had to maintain, so Lady Agnes had learnt to be a careful and clever manager, and Patricia was let into many little secrets of her aunt's housekeeping which amused her very much and excited her admiration also not a little.

On the very day that Thorold Musgrove was expected to arrive Lady Agnes despatched her niece into —, the large town which lay a few miles away from her house.

She had quite a dozen little commissions for Patricia to execute. If some of these errands were not wholly necessary, the girl never imagined it; she was only glad to be of any assistance, and never gave a thought to the fact that it was her aunt's strategy to keep her as much occupied and amused as was possible.

Maxton guessed the tactics at once, but she played into Lady Agnes' hands capitally.

"Now, Pat dear, you must put on your big sealskin, not the short jacket, but that splendid coat which Danvers gave you last winter. You must wear your respirator and a thick veil, and Maxton will pick you out a comfortable fly when you get to Linchester, so that you can drive about and not get fresh cold. Here is the list of things you are to bring back, darling."

Patricia went off only too pleased to do anything to help her aunt.

"She is so good and kind," she said to Maxton.

"I don't see why she shouldn't be," sniffed Maxton, and Patricia laughed.

"You are a silly old goose," she said affectionately.

It was not a long journey to Linchester, and Patricia with her maid soon arrived at her destination.

"We will walk for a little, it will do me good," she declared, and she carried her way, though Maxton urged a fly most determinately. Patricia knew her way about she had been to Linchester once or twice before; and she led Maxton into the street. It was a large ugly town, but there were some really good shops.

Lady Agnes' commissions were scattered about, and after awhile Patricia allowed her maid to hail a fly.

Just as she was getting in she became conscious that someone was bobbing to her respectfully, and smiling half eagerly, half wistfully as though she feared she would not be noticed.

Patricia was puzzled only for an instant, and then she recognized the woman whom she had helped on that last day of her visit at the Wold, and whom she had driven over to Crowhurst in the waggonette. She spoke at once to the woman in her kindest way, making inquiries as to her health and well doing.

Maxton surveyed these proceedings with a certain amount of complacent disdain. She was well accustomed to Patricia's little ways.

The woman was evidently deeply gratified by Patricia's kindness.

"I've never forgot you, my lady, never," she



"I HAVE NOT SET EYES ON THAT MAN FOR THREE YEARS," MR. BLANQUEVILLE EXCLAIMED.

said again and again. "Yes, my lady, I've been in sad trouble, I've lost one as was very dear to me, my lady, and it's been a great sorrow to me, but life's got many sorrows as we grow older my lady. Please Heaven you may never know them."

Patricia had some gentle word for her humble friend.

"I am staying near here for a little while," she said, "give me your name and address. I should like to hear of you occasionally; perhaps I may be of some use to you, if so I will gladly do anything in my power."

"Ah! my lady, I knew you was an angel, it's writ in your face. There's nothing you can do for me, my lady, leastwise I don't want nothing, but if you could help my boy to do something. Ah! my lady, that would take a load off my mind!"

"Tell me of your son. What can he do? is he very young?" Patricia stood at the door of the fly, tall and stately and slender, in her beautiful long sealskin coat with the veil flung back from her face. Maxton tried to entice her into the cab. It was a cold damp day, but Patricia would not move till the woman had told her tale eagerly. Her son was quite young, he could do most anything, he knew so many things; he could be a valet to a gentleman, or a groom, or a game-keeper, or in fact any sort of post about a large house he was competent to fill. He was in London seeking for employment just at that moment, but his mother had his address and could send to him at once if something happened.

"He's got good references and a good character, my lady," she said, as Patricia finally allowed her maid to draw her into the fly. "Heaven bless you, my lady! You don't know how often I have prayed for you and your happiness, my lady; thank you many, many times for your goodness!"

The cab rolled on, leaving the woman bobbing respectfully.

"She looks honest, Maxton," Patricia said, a

little hurriedly, as she found herself alone with her maid.

She was always a little nervous with Maxton, who, good soul as she was in many things, had no great sympathy with her young lady's various charities.

Maxton gave her favourite sniff.

"It don't never do to judge by appearances. You give me her name and address, my lady, I'll find out if all she says is true, and if it is you can help her if you want to do so. You can't ask anyone to give her son a situation without knowing a little about him and her too." A common sense remark, the justice of which even Patricia's ready generosity could not deny.

"Yes, you shall make all inquiry, Maxton, and if your account is satisfactory I will try and get the poor old creature some place for her son. He is evidently very dear to her, Maxton; she had tears in her eyes when she spoke of him. I should like to help her if I could. Let me know something as soon as possible."

Maxton promised this and kept her word.

She found an opportunity of going over to Linchester by herself in the course of the next few days, and the result of her visit was satisfactory, so far as the woman was concerned.

Jane Butler was said to be a most honest, hard-working woman—a widow with two sons, one of whom had been an incurable invalid and had died only a few weeks before.

Mrs. Butler worked at a factory in the town, and all who knew her had a good word for her. She was sober, honest, respectable, and her whole life was wrapped up in her remaining son.

Maxton repeated everything faithfully to her young mistress.

"We must help her most certainly," the girl said. "I will write to Smithson and ask him to give this young man something to do under him." Maxton approved of this.

"Mr. Smithson knows what he's about," she said, with a certain amount of awe in her tone, for Smithson, the head gamekeeper at Belton Towers, was a very grand and important person,

even to so valued and privileged a servant as Maxton.

The house was full of gaiety and bustle now, but Patricia found a moment in which to write to her brother's gamekeeper.

"Please give him a trial," she said, after she had introduced the name of Richard Bolton. She also enclosed the address of the mother; "if you write to her," Patricia continued, "she will let her son know, and then he can go to you direct."

The letter was closed and despatched.

How little did the girl imagine, as she gave this epistle to Maxton to post, that her simple act of charity was to become, later on, the pivot upon which would work a series of circumstances which would end in that, which would mean not only the ruin of a man's heart and love, but a tragedy so terrible that the memory of it would live undimmed for years.

(To be continued.)

THE ANTIQUITY OF THE TOMATO.—The tomato, which used to be called the love-apple, in allusion to its supposed power of exciting the tender feelings, is of a good old age. In 1583 it was grown in the continental gardens at Antwerp, and the fruit was eaten dressed with pepper, salt and oil. In 1597 and sixty years later it was grown in England "for ornament and curiosity only." In the middle of the eighteenth century the Italians and Spaniards ate them as we do now, with pepper and salt, and they were also introduced into sauces. In England they were no longer grown simply as ornaments, but were much used in soups. It is stated that at the beginning of the present century the growth of the fruit around London exceeded the demand. Each plant, it was calculated, produced fruit weighing at least twenty pounds. The individual fruits in the year 1818 were also of extraordinary size, many of them exceeding twelve inches in circumference and weighing twelve ounces each.



"WELL, GOOD-BYE, DEAR BERTIE! TRUST ME, I WON'T FORGET YOU," SAID HEBE AFFECTIONATELY.

THE SECRETS AND SHADOWS OF CASTLEGRANGE.

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CHAPTER IX.

ON the next Tuesday evening after dinner, Mrs. Joyce, her open novel face downward on the floor, was snoring horribly upon the sofa—a sound distracting to fine nerves. No wonder that Julian, with a gesture of impatience, ceased playing, rose abruptly from the piano, and whispered,—

"Hebe, get on your hat, and come out with me. I cannot really stand it any longer."

"I think she makes more noise than usual to-night; and it is owing to the warm weather, I expect," I whispered back sympathetically.

"My dear, it is barbarous any way," rejoined Mr. Tresillian, as he extricated his stick from the hat-tree and umbrella-stand in the hall. He did not always use it indoors.

So we wandered out into the garden and down the path to the gate in the low flint wall, and, stepping forth into the cool grassy roadway, strolled on almost insensibly to the sloping pasture-grounds beyond the village.

It was still quite light, though the bats were coming abroad and the grasshoppers were chirping lustily among the nettles by the roadside.

The tint of the high sky was a wan apple-green that melted into forget-me-not blue; and crimped bars of palest rose, and ridges of dark violet fringed with lurid gold, yet lay in the western heaven.

Since quitting the house Mr. Tresillian had not spoken a word; and I, fancying that he wished for quiet, had kept silent too. He seemed meditative and sad to-night; and I decided within my own mind that he was perhaps thinking of Doreen.

He said presently,—

"And are you now quite reconciled, Hebe, to the idea of going away from this place?"

"I—I don't think I mind," I replied slowly; "because I daresay I shall be able to come back again some day. You see, it is not like going away for ever, is it?"

"Certainly not. If you should still wish to do so by-and-by, you will be able to return to Thorpe, or go whithersoever you please, for the matter of that. You will be a great heiress and your own mistress, Hebe, when you are twenty-one years old, you know," Mr. Tresillian said.

"A great heiress! Shall I!" I said vaguely, feeling in fact rather frightened and uncomfortable at the new prospect of heiress-ship and limitless freedom—truly sorry, indeed, than otherwise—for it was the first I had heard of this strange thing!

"Yes," Julian continued quietly; "your mother herself was a great heiress—your Aunt Doris equally so, of course. They—they both being dead, and you, dear, to put it as plainly and as simply as I can, having been left an orphan with neither brother nor sister, the whole of the large fortune which Squire Everard, your grandfather, divided between his twin-daughters, will become yours, absolutely all your own, Hebe, on the day you find yourself of age."

"I am sure I shall not know what to do with it all," I sighed.

"Wisdom, let us hope, dear, will come with years," smiled Julian sadly.

I had no rejoinder for this. I knew not what to say. Of course, in my case, as with other people, wisdom might or might not come with years. There was no telling.

Thus we strolled onward until the village was out of sight behind us, and in our faces came buffeting the fine salt breath of the ocean as it swept over the dim wide downs.

Rather to my surprise, by-and-by, Julian spoke openly of my mother—related, in a gentle, discursive fashion, sundry tender little anecdotes of the girlhood of Doreen Tresillian—traits illustrative of her pride, her wilfulness, her quick temper, and quicker remorse for the same; her sweetness, her sincerity, her faith and true-

heartedness; and the divers other innate qualities which together had gone to form in Doreen such a singularly inconsistent yet attractive personality.

Listening to him, I slipped a trustful hand into his as I walked by his side; and his fingers closed instantly and sympathetically over mine. I liked to hear him speak thus of my mother, and to know that he had loved her so dearly, albeit, alas! in vain! For her sake, I thought and hoped that he would perhaps in time get to care very much for me. I should indeed stand very greatly in need of somebody wise and stable and good, somebody who might look after me and advise me properly, when I should grow up and become the great heiress he had talked about! And then in my heart I wished that he, Julian Tresillian, small and crippled though he was, had been my father instead of the wicked Colonel, Hector Fairburn, who had treated so basely the women who had loved and trusted him. What a kind and just and upright father, trustworthy always, he—Julian—would have been, I was thinking, with a sincere regret and self-pity that things in this world should go so contrarily!—and for a child of his how easy a matter would it have been to love him!

"I am sorry she was so—so cold-hearted and unkind," I said impulsively, with all the artlessness and appalling lack of tact of twelve years old; "and it does seem so hard, too, that just what my poor Aunt Doris could do, my mother, Doreen, could not!"

"Hebe—Hebe, child," Julian exclaimed then, brusquely, almost sharply for him, "what in the world do you mean? What on earth are you talking about?"

"Love you, I mean," I said fearlessly. "And oh! how I wish that you could have been my father!"

But I checked myself; for Julian Tresillian seemed to quail and shiver as if he had received a blow that he might not resent. A sensitive flush or what I took for it, spread swiftly over his face.

It was some seconds before he said, in a pained and altered tone,—

"It puzzles me indeed to imagine, it passes my comprehension, truly, Hebe, how a young child like you can possibly know aught of—"

I interrupted him eagerly with,—

"Oh, but Mrs. Joyce, you see, has often told Bertie and me about her pupils Doris and Doreen, and the days when she lived with them as their governess and chaperon at Castlegrange; and so we have heard sometimes—"

In his turn my cousin Julian interrupted me. His voice was colder and sterner than I had ever heard it yet.

"Mrs. Joyce is indiscreet," was all he said.

I felt scared and snubbed. His manner had turned so strange and distant. I had been upon the verge of confessing to him that I did honestly wish that he could have been my father, my own dear father, instead of that wicked dead and gone Colonel whom I had never known, and for whose shade even I could not therefore in reason be expected to feel the least reverence or affection; but now, on second thoughts, I decided that I had better hold my peace—perhaps indeed I had already said enough.

However, as he did not let go my hand, and the clasp on it was still warm and firm, I plucked up courage after a space to address him again. We would leave Castlegrange and its shadows alone, and give a new turn to the conversation.

"Do you know," I observed rather timidly at first, but gaining confidence as I proceeded, "do you know that it is exactly a week ago to-night—and about the same time too!—that Bertie and I were together in these very meadows, just as you and I are here together now! Is it not funny that it should happen so?—and who would have believed it possible only a week ago? Yes; it was last Tuesday evening. Bertie sat on a fence up yonder making a sketch of the Martello towers in the distance; and I sat on the grass, waiting whilst he drew. When it got too dark to see any longer, we went home to The Lea to supper; and there was Mrs. Joyce, poor dear, so dreadfully flurried and upset that she could hardly tell us anything at all about your letter, which she had just received!"

"Ah, was that so, dear?" said Julian amused; speaking now quite in the old kind friendly way. I did not mind then; because I felt that the little cloud between us had passed, was gone, and that I was forgiven—that is, if I had really sinned.

"Yes," I chatted on easily once more, "she seemed, somehow, to be afraid of—of—well, afraid of we hardly knew what; and I believe that Bertie and I both thought at first—"

"I fancy," here Julian put in, straining his sight upon the mild blue dusk, "that yonder goes your friend Bertie. There!—along that side path by the watercress brook. He is evidently taking a short cut home."

I strained my own eyes likewise.

"Yes—it is Bertie!" I cried eagerly. "But he does not see us! May I run after him and catch him!"

"By all means, if you can," said Julian.

And forthwith off I scampered, shouting ungrammatically in the excitement of the moment,—

"Hi, Bertie, stop! Don't run away again! It's me and Mr. Tressillian! Hi, Bertie—hi!"

Bertie himself was marching along, whistling, with a sketch-block under his arm. But, on hearing my panting voice, and looking round as I came up with him, he exclaimed, in much astonishment,—

"You, Hebe! Where the dickens did you spring from!"

Somewhat out of breath still, I explained that Mr. Tressillian and I had come out for a stroll in the twilight, because Mrs. Joyce had snored so distractingly, and spoilt my cousin Julian's beautiful playing. And then I upbraided him for staying so long away from us, and asked him what he meant by it? Was he offended or anything?

"You have offended Mrs. Joyce, at any rate," I averred.

Bertie got rather red and laughed rather awkwardly; but said frankly enough,—

"I didn't want to appear intrusive, Hebe, you

see; and that's the truth. I thought Mr. Tressillian might consider it pushing of me—perhaps, impertinent—and all that, don't you know, if I came bothering round at Lea Cottage whilst he was there. So I thought I'd just keep in the background for a bit. But I say, Hebe," he added, seriously, "what's this I hear! You are going away!"

"You know all about it, then!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes; old Prudence has been dropping a word here; a hint there; and consequently everybody in Thorpe knows something about it by this time."

"Well, you take it pretty coolly, I must say, Bertie," I remarked reproachfully.

"I've had time, you see, to get over it, dear," said he, quaintly. "Besides, I was prepared for something of this sort after Mrs. Joyce received that letter."

"I don't believe you're a bit sorry!"

"Sorry! ain't I! I am, though—I am awfully sorry. I think I've reason to be. Remember all the jolly suppers and things I've had at Lea Cottage! By Jove! Hebe, I shall miss you tremendously—you and Mrs. Joyce!" Bertie said heartily, "as much, indeed, as you'll both miss the covered-cart, I'm sure. By-the-bye, little 'un," laughed he, "the ogre isn't much of an ogre, after all, is he, as regards size? Why, he couldn't gobble you up if he tried! The usurper, at all events, is nothing very formidable to look at. That was a surprise—a staggerer—if you like!"

I objected to the banter; I was in no humour for it; and answered warmly at once,—

"Bertie, now once for all, you shall not call Mr. Tressillian names. I won't have it. You don't know how nice and kind—and—and clever he is!"

"Why, you called him a usurper yourself, you know you did," said Bertie, staring with all his might.

"Yes, I know—at first; and I'm sorry now; and I never will again—it's a shame. He doesn't deserve it; and I won't hear nasty things said about him without standing up for him, Bertie. So there!"

"We have been getting along, I see," observed Bertie, admiringly.

"I don't know what you mean by 'getting along'; but this I do know—I like him very much; I like him a great deal better than I ever thought I should. I very nearly told him just now that I wished he was my father."

"Oh, come, I say! We have been going it!" Here Bertie laughed outright; and I thought him exceedingly vulgar, ill-mannered, and unfeeling, and longed to box his ears. But at that moment Mr. Tressillian came limping up and joined us; and so, as well as I could in the circumstances, I introduced my cousin Julian to Bertie Wilford.

Bertie, tiresome as he could be, had nice manners and perceptions, however, when he chose; and now he took off his old straw hat with the red ribbon, and said,—

"How do you do, sir?" so pleasantly and so winningly that I am certain Mr. Tressillian liked him on the spot.

People, I fancy, were invariably taken with Bertie as soon as they were introduced to him. But he looked so much taller and manlier, and in every respect so much handsomer than Julian, that I somehow felt quite troubled, jealous even, for my rich lame kinsman, and unreasonably vexed with poor happy-go-lucky Bertie for the physical advantages he possessed in such abundance over the other!

We all three strolled home to The Lea together; and Bertie, at Mr. Tressillian's cordial invitation, was nothing loth to come in with us.

And then, at Julian's orders, coffee and claret and cigarettes made a speedy appearance, and Mrs. Joyce woke up in comical haste and had the lamps and the canoles lighted, and scolded Bertie affectionately for his cruel desertion of her, as she called it in her playful way—and altogether we spent a very bright and happy evening; it being actually eleven o'clock before Bertie Wilford rose to go!

"Some time next week, Bertie, you know, we

are saying good-bye to The Lea," Mr. Tressillian remarked kindly, all unconsciously calling our pastor's son by his Christian name as naturally as if he had known the lad all his life.

"Yes. And I am awfully sorry to hear it, sir," said Bertie in his hearty way.

"Well, you must come and dine with us one evening, my boy, before we go. Time's getting short. Come to-morrow," said Julian.

Bertie explained, however, that to-morrow being Wednesday, he would be due at Shoreham in the studio of his friend George Aragon, and probably might be late home. Might he say, though, that he should be delighted to come on Thursday instead, that is if it made no difference?

"None in the world—and Thursday, then, by all means," assented Julian, with a friendly grip of the hand. And Bertie at last bade us good-night in the best of spirits, with the pleasure of Thursday evening, as he said gaily, to look forward to.

CHAPTER X.

THESE were our last days at Lea Cottage!—and now in memory looking back on them, after many years, I marvel greatly how I could have borne so easily, not to say indifferently, our going away "for good" from that peaceful Sussex home!

For I had been so happy at Thorpe, with Bertie and Mrs. Joyce and the covered-cart; and I did honestly think, just at the time of removal, that I never again should be quite so happy elsewhere. Nevertheless I "bore up wonderfully," according to Mrs. Joyce.

"Some time next week"—so Mr. Tressillian had announced in a casual manner to Bertie Wilford we were to take our leave of the village; and it was now settled that the day of our departure should be the coming Monday.

Mrs. Joyce, not without the shedding of a few sentimental tears, had already begun to pack up for herself and for me.

On Thursday morning—in the evening of which day Bertie was coming to dinner—Julian followed me out into the garden again to my bower under the drooping ash.

As usual the early post had brought to him a large number of various letters and papers; one of the former when opened apparently affording him much satisfaction.

But he enlightened us in no wise on the matter at the breakfast-table; and not until he found me in my favourite haunt under the trained ash on the lawn, did he say,—

"Hebe, I have heard definitely this morning from my friend Madame Adolphe."

"Have you?" I answered wonderingly. Who was Madame Adolphe?

"Yes. She now writes me for a certainty that there will be a vacancy in her house after the midsummer recess—by-the-bye she does not call it a school exactly—and will therefore take charge of you, my dear little cousin, during the next five or six years; or, at any rate, so long as I am abroad and absent from Castlegrange."

"Oh!" I exclaimed blankly—and could say no more at the minute.

"I am sure that you will be very happy with Madame Adolphe. She is in all respects an excellent woman—good and sensible as she is accomplished—or I should not dream of handing you over to her care; of trusting her so absolutely. You will go to Madame in August, Hebe."

"Oh!" I said again.

"Hebe, do you know Bath?" he inquired next.

Assuredly his thoughts must have been wandering curiously, or he would scarcely have asked such a ridiculous question. It amused me, and I laughed—I couldn't help it. I reminded him that I knew Shoreham and Worthing and Sandfield and Thorpe, and other spots and villages round about; and I believed that there was such a place as Bath marked somewhere or other on the map in the west of England; but that, so far as I myself was conscious, I had never been anywhere beyond our own quiet corner of Sussex.

"Ah, true—poor little soul!" Julian said musingly—"I had forgotten. Well, dear, the next few weeks shall be a thorough treat and change for you; that is, if I can make them so. It is only right that you should enjoy yourself for a while in the holidays before you make the acquaintance of Madame Adolphe."

"Does this Madame Adolphe live at Bath, then?" I asked with pardonable inquisitiveness. "Yes, dear; at No. 5, Spa Gardens, Bath. That is Madame's address."

And then Mr. Tressillian returned thoughtfully indoors; doubtless, I guessed, to write to Madame Adolphe—thus leaving me to my solitude, and with ample leisure in it, to ponder the fresh news he had just imparted.

The evening brought Bertie Wilford; and he had to be told about Madame, of course. Mr. Tressillian and Mrs. Joyce had not yet entered the drawing-room. Bertie and I were there alone.

"A foreigner!" said he, rather alightingly. "Humph! Wasn't an English school-mistress good enough? For my part, Hebe, I don't see why you couldn't have gone on living comfortably here with jolly old Mrs. Joyce. She's English to the backbone."

"Mr. Tressillian—who has been, oh! so good and generous about it all—says that Mrs. Joyce has been working hard for many years, and that it is time now she rested, Bertie." Bertie's eyes shone suspiciously, and he passed his handkerchief slowly over his lips. "And as to Madame Adolphe being a foreigner, Bertie, you are wrong there. She is no more a foreigner, really, than you or I. Mr. Tressillian told us a good deal about her at luncheon. She's a born and bred Englishwoman, in fact, who married a noted Belgian—a leading spirit—a shining light—a learned Professor or something in the scientific world; I think that was how my cousin Julian expressed it. Long ago Mr. Tressillian's mother and Madame Adolphe's mother were intimate friends; and that's how he—my cousin Julian—came to know all about her."

"Oh, I see—I'm sure I beg her pardon! And the learned Professor himself is dead now, I suppose?" inquired Bertie.

"Yes; and somehow, it seems, he did not leave his widow at all well off. But luckily she had no children, and was very clever herself, and also very courageous; and she determined that, if brains and pluck and energy could help her on in it, she would not be beaten by the world. On the contrary, she would get the upper hand of it."

"Bravo, Madame Adolphe!" threw in Bertie, nodding.

"And so she opened a sort of school—not a bit like an ordinary school, though; something indeed quite different and distinct in itself. She had many influential friends, chiefly owing to the fame of her husband, and they all willingly promised to assist her to the best of their power. And the consequence, eventually, was that Madame Adolphe, in her enterprise, my cousin Julian said, prospered and flourished exceedingly—like a green bay tree, he said. At the most she never receives more than eight or nine girls; she does not wish for a larger number; and she is at all times most careful and particular in every direction as to who these girls are. She would not take a tradesman's daughter into her house, even though her people were ever so wealthy."

"Poor thing!" said Bertie ironically, who, I have since understood, was something of a budding Radical in those days. I was still engaged in telling him all I knew—which at present, however, was not much—about Madame Adolphe and her establishment at Bath, when Mr. Tressillian and Mrs. Joyce joined us, and we were summoned to dinner.

One would have thought that the shadow of the near parting, the coming separation and dispersion, would have been hovering, as it were, over us depressingly; numbing and fettering our tongues, and touching our spirits with gloom. Yet not so. The dinner in its cosy way was faultless—old Prudence, when she chose, was an incomparable cook. The wines of their kind were perfect—Mr. Tressillian in that department was an irreproachable judge. Everything, in brief, went well.

Bertie Wilford laughed and joked, and talked so easily and amusingly—and if a trifle slangily; also now and then, I am sure Bertie neither knew it nor meant it—in his unaffected, bright, boyish fashion, that even Mr. Tressillian himself smiled frequently, and once or twice was obliged to laugh outright.

He said indeed afterwards that Bertie was capital company; and I was so pleased to hear him say it, because I felt then that I had not praised Bertie to him overmuch.

And Mrs. Joyce—is it necessary to add?—was very merry likewise. She smiled perpetually; allowed no dish whatever to pass her unapproved; and by-and-by laughed at one of Bertie's yarns, as he called them, until her dimpled cheeks and her rosy forehead were glistening all over with a moisture like dew!

And as for myself, it made me laugh and feel glad only to see the blitheness of those around me. When one is young, nothing on earth is more infectious than good spirits; and surely a cheerful soul is a gift direct from the gods! O blessed, careless childhood! O blind, thrice-happy youth! Like our being born and our dying, they are things that can happen but once!

And then later—when my governess and I left Mr. Tressillian and Bertie Wilford together with their wine and tobacco, the window open wide and the sweet evening air breathing in, and the wicks of the pearly wax candles twinking like fairy wand-tips amid the flowers that filled the bowls and *eperviers* upon the table—then my cousin Julian, in his sympathetic, gently-winning way, questioned the lad about his work and his hopes, his chances of success, and his painter friend and master, George Aragon.

Bertie's bright colour grew brighter directly; his blue eyes kindled and shone; unconsciously he put aside all thought of himself, and talked to my kinsman Julian only of George Aragon. Ever nothing loth to speak of his friend, and the neglect awarded by a cold and ignorant world to a brilliant and gifted man, Bertie ere long on that evening had revealed to Mr. Tressillian precisely that which he was desirous to ascertain, perhaps, concerning the unknown painter at Shoreham.

In the drawing-room, whilst Mrs. Joyce was busy with the tea-cups, Julian played to us; and, if aught else were then wanted to complete Bertie's subjugation, it was done forthwith by means of Schubert and Mozart as rendered by the tender master-touch of Julian Tressillian.

Bertie came over to me.

"By Jove!" he whispered enthusiastically, "I am sorry that I ever thought ill of him or spoke disrespectfully of him, Hebe. Why, he's a splendid fellow—you're quite right—in spite of—of—you know what I mean—it's cruel even to think of it! With that sweet and noble, unselfish nature of his, he ought to be so—so different to look at; oughtn't he? And I say, Hebe, what do you think—you'd never guess. He says that if ever I find myself sketching or landscape-painting down in Westshire, in the neighbourhood of Castlegrange, why, I'm just to consider myself free of the old place—whether he happens to be there at the time or not—park, forest, house, anywhere. Hebe, I'll tell you what—he's a regular brick!"

Eulogy higher than this Bertie could not give him. Julian, it was evident, had vanquished us all round.

When Bertie Wilford was gone, and Mrs. Joyce and I were upstairs, she clasped me to her in a good-night embrace, and burst into unexpected tears. Possibly she was a little hysterical that night, the dear, kind, soft-hearted soul!

"Darling!" she cried, incoherently, "we have had a happy evening, haven't we? Nearly our last at The Lea. Think of it! And yet—and yet how good—how charming is Mr. Tressillian, isn't he? This time next week where shall we be?"

"Ah, I cannot tell," said I, soberly.

"No more can I," laughed Mrs. Joyce, with a closer clutch. And then she wept anew.

Monday morning dawned—we had said good-bye to everyone we knew in Thorpe and its

neighbourhood; of course not forgetting our pastor, Bertie's dear old father; and now the end was indeed come. How strange, how dreamlike, how utterly unreal did it all seem!

Our luggage—and altogether there was a formidable heap of it—had been sent on before us in a cart; and then arrived at the gate of Lea Cottage the one ancient landau boasted by "The Mariner's Rest," to take Mr. Tressillian, Mrs. Joyce and me to the Sandfield station. As I have stated elsewhere, we had no railway station at Thorpe.

The parting even with old Prudence Best was a painful business; for beneath her gaunt and rough exterior there beat a tender heart.

"Come and see old Prudence when you be growed up, won't you, dearie?" said she, chokily. "Don't you go and forget her quite, Miss Hebe—that 'ud be too bad of ye—there's a ducky!"

"I won't, Prudence, indeed I won't," I promised, bestowing abundant kisses upon the prickly old lips and chin. "I'll come back to Thorpe and see you as soon as ever I can. I will—I will—yes, I will!" Hug, hug, hug. "I do really and truly mean it—there!" Smack, smack, smack. And finally we got away.

On the Sandfield platform stood Bertie Wilford; waiting there to see the very last of us, according to previous arrangement. And there, too, outside the station by the white palings, stood the patient Jenny and her covered cart.

Bertie had of course driven over to Sandfield in it. But ah me! I could scarcely endure to glance in Jenny's direction; neither, I perceived, could Mrs. Joyce herself. I am sure we both longed to go and kiss her nose—that gentle velvety soft black nose of hers. But the tears in our eyes, already hot and thick, were almost ungovernable as it was.

Mr. Tressillian, with a sympathy unexpressed, an intuition wonderful in a man, had possessed himself of my little cold hand; and my childish clinging fingers had at once closed convulsively around his own. Somehow I felt safer and happier then. There were balm and security—so it seemed to me—merely in the touch of that strong kind hand.

Bertie was unwontedly pale and quiet—in fact, singularly unlike the bright young Bertie Wilford we had got so well to know and to love in the dear old joyous, careless days that were now gone for ever more.

And I could not help seeing that it was indeed a hard matter for the poor lad to bear up bravely and like a man, now that the very last minute had actually arrived for us—for him and for us!

In came the train alongside the gravelled platform walk, hissing and groaning horribly in the usual manner; and when it stopped, Mr. Tressillian said something to the guard, and we got a first-class compartment all to ourselves.

Bertie remained standing by the carriage door, looking down the line, where there was nothing to see; and I noticed that his lips, though apparently set, were in reality far from steady. That was why he looked so persistently down the line, poor boy, and not at us in the train.

"Is the luggage and everything all right, I wonder?" said Mrs. Joyce, speaking as if she had something the matter with her tongue.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Joyce—don't trouble," Bertie managed to say distinctly. "It was labelled before you came, you know, and I have just seen it put into the van. I assure you it is all right."

Two or three late passengers—and are not there always two or three such people to be met with at a railway station?—were flying wildly up and down, as the guard and porters bawled in stentor tones:

"Now then, stand back there! Any more going! Take your places, please!"—thus making the poor late folk rush madder than ever.

"Well, good-bye, dear Bertie! You must be sure and write to me, remember; and I will write to you whenever I can. Trust me, I won't forget you."

And unmindful of Mr. Tressillian's presence or that of anybody else, I leaned well out of the window, and in this sad parting-hour let Bertie

Wilford kiss me just as affectionately and as lingeringly as he pleased.

"And, Bertie dear, you must say good-bye to Mr. Aragon for me; won't you, Bertie?" I added, the tears now running freely enough. For I was thinking of our picnic under the cliffs—all such a little while ago—all such a little while ago!

"And for me too, Bertie dear," here chimed in the muffled voice of Mrs. Joyce, who had grabbed affrightedly at my frock in the rear, lest perchance I should lose my balance at the window with disastrous results.

"Yes, I will—I will; I'll remember, do not fear. I'll say good-bye to Aragon for both of you. But I say, don't you cry, Hebe—for pity's sake, don't cry! Because I—I cannot bear to see it, dear."

The train was moving slowly onward; and Bertie Wilford was walking as slowly by the side of it.

Then it was that Mrs. Joyce, who was leaning back in her corner, sobbing noisily, with one hand holding her pocket-handkerchief over her eyes, thrust the other hand past me and out of the carriage-window, in a blind groping sort of way, in order to seek Bertie's in a last farewell squeeze.

But she poked it right into his eye instead, and thereby astonished him exceedingly!

It made us all laugh—at such a time it seemed too absurd!

And so happily, in the end, as Julian himself said, there was sunshine through the rain; and the last good-byes of all were spoken with smiles as well as tears.

(To be continued.)

THREE miles from the village of Krisuvik, in the great volcanic district of Iceland, there is a whole mountain composed of eruptive clays and pure white sulphur. Although this sulphur mountain is a wonder in itself, interest centres to that spot on account of a beautiful grotto which penetrates the western slope to an unknown depth. The main entrance is a fissure-like chasm, about 60 feet in height, and only 8 or 10 feet in width. The floor inclines for the first 50 or 60 yards, and then suddenly pitches downward, seemingly into the very bowels of the earth. Here the fissure widens into a considerable cavern, with walls, roof, floor, stalactites and stalagmites, all composed of pure crystallised sulphur.

WALLED CITIES IN ASIA.—The first glimpse we get of an Eastern walled city unfolds at once memories of our childhood days, which have perhaps never been awakened since, and the pictures of our childish books, which impress themselves so vividly upon our minds, are reproduced in the bright colours of old, when we are brought face to face with the quaint battlements and the dark gateways, with the accessories of bright, burning sunshine and turbaned figures and processions of camels and the listless calm of the tropical land. Such old cities are still to be seen in India, still walked in the old fashion and still peopled by the figures of the Biblical picture book. Close akin to them are those walled towns standing on the canals of mid-China, passing through which, say at the close of day, when every tower and every roof stands out clearly cut against the brilliant western sky and we are challenged by a grotesque figure, armed with a spear and probably wearing armour, the illusion is complete, and for the moment we find it hard to realise that we are travelling at the end of the nineteenth century. Even in much changed Japan there are old cities which still retain their walls of the age of feudalism, and in the very heart of the capital the imperial palace is surrounded by the same quaint fortifications which in old troublesome times made it an *imperium in imperio*, although the walls are crumbling and the gates are never shut, and the moats have been abandoned to the lotus and to carp of monstrous size and fabulous age.

THE SQUIRE'S SON.

—20—

CHAPTER III.

It would take three days of good walking to reach London, and how he was to exist through those three days was an enigma to Hugh.

He had left his watch, chain, and other jewellery upon the dressing-table of his bed-room, and had emptied his pocket of every copper.

The only thing they contained indeed was a knife—useful piece of cutlery enough, but utterly worthless as an article of food—and a small gold pencil-case, which had been the gift of one of his school-fellows.

At the end of five miles he came upon an outlying farm, where he was well known.

He had hoped to pass unnoticed and unrecognised, but the woman of the house happened to come to the door with a pan of milk, and, seeing him, gave him "Good-even."

Nodding with a smile, he strode on, but she called after him, and when he turned back, offered him a drink of milk, saying, respectfully, "that it was a warm night, and he had far to go"—thinking he was making a circuit of home.

He was very thirsty, but his pride would not allow him to accept the refreshing draught, for he argued that the milk was offered to Hugh the heir to Dale House, and not to Hugh the outcast, and walked on thirstier for the sight of it.

At nightfall he had walked twelve miles, and looked round for a resting-place.

In a field there stood a haystack and a tumble-down barn. Between the two he threw himself down, lying in the shadow of the hay, and, though his heart was heavy and his brain busy with sad thoughts he soon fell asleep.

He awoke in the morning, not very much refreshed, but, finding a stream at the end of the field, threw off his clothes and plunged in.

The bath freshened him, but gave him a tremendous appetite, a most unfortunate gift, considering he saw no chance of getting a breakfast.

However, he was young and wonderfully strong, and by feeding on his pride, darted off again.

At noon, when the sun grew broiling hot, and he had left the Dale many miles behind him, he felt faint, and almost powerless to proceed, and, very sick at heart, for your empty stomach is a dreadful Old Man of the Sea, flung himself down under a tree.

A man's footsteps awoke him from an uneasy doze, and starting to his feet he saw an old pedler, whose nose proclaimed him an Israelite, standing looking at him.

"Can I sell you a nicesh brooch for the young ladies?" he asked, with an insinuating smile.

Hugh shook his head, but the Jew, who never took the first refusal on principle, unsling his pack, and, kneeling down, displayed his stock in trade.

A metal pencil-case lying among the heap of trinkets gave Hugh an idea.

"Is that silver?" he asked.

The Jew hesitated and was lost.

"It's ash good ash shilver, my tear," he replied.

"What's the price?" asked Hugh.

"Ten shillings," said the Jew, taking it up and turning it over with a wonderful look of admiration in his bloodshot eyes.

"Ten shillings!" said Hugh, made sharp already by his poverty—your ablest schoolmaster.

"What would a silver one be worth, then?"

"Eh?—oh, fifteen, my tear."

"And a gold one?" continued Hugh.

The Jew lifted his thick eyebrows.

"I'm sorry I haven't got a goldish onesh," he replied, looking heart-broken.

"Yes, but what would it be worth?" said Hugh.

"Twenty shillings," replied the Jew, "a good onesh."

"Ah," said Hugh, pulling his out of his pocket.

"What would you give me for that?"

The Jew's long claws seized it at once, Hugh putting his hands behind him, for fear the Jew's

dirty talons should touch him, and leaning against the tree.

"It is hn't gold," said the Jew, with an affectation of disdain.

"Yes, it is," said Hugh, "and you know it."

The Jew looked at it again more closely.

"It isn't a good one," he said, this time with a decision that nearly deceived Hugh.

"Is it not?" he said. "Well, what will you give me for it?"

The Jew looked at him keenly.

"Where did you get it from?" he said.

"That's no business of yours," retorted Hugh, sternly.

"Well, well, well, don't be in a passion, my tear," said the pedler. "I'll give you ten shillings for it and ask no questions."

"You said it was worth twenty a minute since," said Hugh, eying him sternly.

"Yesh, yesh," whined the Jew, "but wheresh is my profit to come from—my leetle profit? Besides, how do I know you didn't steal it, my tear?"

Hugh smiled gaily.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

The Jew pointed with his pencil towards Dale.

"Shall you try and sell it there?" Hugh asked.

The Jew looked at him with a knowing leer.

"No, no," he said. "I understand, that's where you found him—eh, my tear? Well, there, I'll give you half a sovereign, and chance how you came by him."

This was what Hugh wanted.

So stipulating that the old villain should not show it at Dale, where every soul would recognise it as his—Master Hugh's—he took the ten shillings from the man's dirty claws and went on his way.

Hugh knew that there were no haystacks in London and that lodgings must be paid for, so he determined to proceed economically.

At the next ale-house, which stood on a hill about a mile from his recent resting-place, he had a crust of bread and cheese and a glass of ale.

Until then he had no idea that bread and cheese and ale had such a delicate and delicious flavour.

No emperor's state banquet was ever so much enjoyed.

Another man in spirits and vigour he resumed his march, and—not to weary the reader by a repetition of haystacks and bread and cheese—entered London from the west on the evening of the third day.

Sixty or seventy years ago there were no such facilities for travelling as we lucky or unlucky people of the present days possess, and Hugh, though the son of a wealthy sire, had not seen the metropolis before.

It wanted half an hour to the grand dinner-time of seven as he turned in at the Marble Arch, drawn as by a loadstone by the string of horses and carriages, for Hugh loved horses, and, even with a heaving heart and the misery of a vanished home and an uncertain future ever before him, could not resist the temptation of leaning against the iron railings and watching the procession of riders mounted on the finest cattle in Europe, for whatever else we behind-the-world English come second in we take the lead in horseflesh.

After this rest he walked down Piccadilly and through the busy streets until towards night he reached the humble thoroughfares of the Eastend.

At a coffee shop which looked clean yet unpretending, and which bore the legend "Beds" in a corner of its window, he engaged a room for the night, feeling half confused by the great city and its noises.

In the morning he breakfasted on a cup of coffee and a huge crust thinly scraped with an oily substance set down on the bill as butter, and strolled out to think on a plan of action.

Like all men whose knowledge of the world is bounded by a country village, Hugh had looked upon London as the golden El Dorado in which one had but to set one's foot and find employment and a fortune; but when he had reached it he was confounded by its magnitude and saw no way to turn.

He knew no craft save that of a farmer, had no friends, no letter of introduction.

What was he to do? As he asked himself this question he wandered on, utterly regardless of his whereabouts, (until the spectacle of a huge wall, to which even the high walls round the Dale were but pigmies, roused him from his reverie and set him making inquiries.

"This is the docks," replied a man dressed like a sailor on shore for a holiday.

"The docks?" said Hugh; "where the ships start from?"

"Yes," said the man. "Pretty nearly all of 'em. Which might you be lookin' for? The *Mary Ann*, or the *Neptune*?"

"I am not looking for either," said Hugh.

"Oh, beg your honour's parding," replied the sailor, taking a long strip of negro-head from his pocket and cutting a slice off with a large clasp-knife that hung suspended round his waist by a tarred rope. "I thought you was a-going in one o' the emigrants."

"The emigrants?" said Hugh, a sudden thought flashing through his brain. "Are there a number of emigrants going out in those two ships then?"

"Yes," said Jack. "The *Neptune*'s a-going to Australia and the *Mary Ann* be going to the Cape."

"The Cape of Good Hope?" said Hugh.

"In course," retorted the sailor, staring at his ignorance; "there ain't no other as I knows on, leastways as is called 'Cape.'"

"Ah!" said Hugh, "and which now do you consider the best place for an emigrant, the Cape of Good Hope or Australia?"

"All depends," said Jack. "If you're going gold-hunting I should say Australia's the place, but if farmin' and cattle keepin' is the game I'd say steer clear to the Cape."

"Have you been to either of the places?" asked Hugh, his heart beating with a flush of the new hope.

"Have I been!" repeated Jack, stopping his munching to slap his thigh with astonishment. "Well, that's a good 'un! This 'ere 'ull make my tenth to the Cape, please Heaven."

"And you like it?" said Hugh, almost ashamed to worry the man with any farther questions, yet anxious to gain all the information he could, for something whispered to him that he was standing at the cross roads of life and that a great deal depended upon the path he took.

"Like it," repeated Jack, "well middlin'. The climate is fair enough, and the tackle ain't bad, but the Hottentots is pison."

"Hottentots!" said Hugh, whose knowledge of geography, as the reader will have discovered before now, was rather limited. "Are there black men there then?"

Jack nodded.

"There be," he said, concisely, "black as ink and cunning ones too."

"You don't seem to like the Hottentots," said Hugh, with a smile.

"I hate 'em," said the sailor, heartily. "They're as nasty a lot as ever was turned out—leastways most of 'em. They stole my bacca and a keg of the ship's stores last voyage, the thieves! Hottentots 'ull take the eyes out o' your head and grin in your teeth while they're doing it—shiver my timbers if they won't!"

Hugh could not repress a smile, sad and earnest as his thoughts were; and, still wanting more information, he proposed that they should go over the way to a little low-browed public-house with the representation of an extremely lively-looking sailor in very clean white trousers hanging up over the door as a sign, and get something to moisten the hunk of tobacco, dirt and treacle in the corner of Jack's mouth.

With a quarter of old Jamaica before him Jack waxed friendly, and wound up a general summary on seamanship, with the advantages and disadvantages of life on land—in which, according to his view, the disadvantages preponderated—by informing Hugh that the *Mary Ann* was only waiting for one or two able-bodied seamen to leave the docks, her passengers and cargo being ready stowed aboard:

Hugh thought for a moment, then surprised the sailor by suddenly asking him if he thought

the captain of the *Mary Ann* would accept him in the place of one of the missing men?

Jack looked him up and down and scratched his head.

"You come along to the skipper, my hearty, and hear what he says," he replied.

Hugh walked to the door at once, and, stepping only to finish the ale which Hugh had left, Jack rolled out after him.

The skipper of the *Mary Ann*, a little man with a brown face and grey eyes, that danced when he laughed like the waves he had so often traversed, after eyeing Hugh for a moment and rubbing his chin, told him he would do, and Hugh, agreeing to work his passage out to Cape Town, signed the name of "Laurence Harman" on the roll-book.

So Hugh Darrell the heir to the Dale existed no longer, and from his ashes sprung Laurence Harman, seaman emigrant on board the *Mary Ann*, bound for the Cape of Good Hope, with "Ask for Stewart's Corner" as his watchword and anchor-sheet.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR twenty minutes after Hugh had left the house Squire Darrell stood stern and motionless at the door through which his stubborn son had passed.

At the end of twenty minutes his frown relaxed and he commenced pacing the handsomely carpeted room, muttering,—

"The impudent jackanapes! What is the world coming to, when one is to be bearded by young scamps who owe you everything, even the very breath that—that—I wonder how long he'll wander up and down the village!"

This was said more softly, for the Squire had never a doubt that his stubborn son had been playing heroics, and that he would come in with the candles, perhaps a little sulky and obstinate still, yet safe at home.

But the candles came without Hugh. Nay, they burnt down in their sockets and still the chair opposite the Squire's, in which Hugh used to smoke his cigar or look over the county paper, remained empty.

There the Squire sat and went through a battle, his pride warring against his natural affections, in which the latter, unused to being called upon were utterly routed by the pride, which was always in arms.

At midnight he was white yet firm. He rang the bell until it clanged like a county alarm, and when the servant hurried to the room sternly ordered him to lock all the doors and get to bed.

The man, who was quite ignorant of the termination of the last quarrel between father and son, ventured to stammer that Mr. Hugh had not returned.

The Squire brought down his fist upon the table with an exclamation.

"If you mention my son's name to me again, you rascal, I'll kick you out of doors after him," he roared, and the man, all excitement, hurried down to the kitchen with the news that Mr. Hugh had been turned out of doors, and that it would be more than any one's place was worth to even name him to the Squire.

One of the tradesmen happening to partake of cake and ale in the kitchen at the moment, hurried off to the village with the weighty news, and before morning the farmers and their labourers had received the warning not to give the fatal name tongue if they valued their leases and the Dale favour.

All night the Squire tossed about on his bed, and waited with that dreary hopefulness which grows at night for the sound of the gate bell, but no Hugh came to ring it repentantly, and he rose in the morning hardened to stone, and now he had got over the first qualms of affection and remorse, as determined as a flint.

The Squire did nothing by halves, and having disowned his son he set about removing all traces of his existence. Every article pertaining to Hugh—his old hats, walking-sticks, cigar-cases, and odd nicknacks which strewed the mantel-shelves and corners were taken up to the room he

had occupied, the door of which the Squire himself locked fast.

Having "done his duty" so far, he sat down to his old oak desk, and taking out a black-edged letter from his pocket, carefully spread it out before him.

It ran thus:—

"SIR,—I have to inform you that Mrs. Betsy Darrell died here on the twenty-second instant, leaving behind her a daughter aged seventeen, and a sum of money amounting to two hundred pounds. As I have ascertained that you are her nearest relative I lose no time in informing you of her decease and respectfully requesting instructions as to the disposal of the estate and of Miss Grace Darrell, her daughter.

"Your obedient servant,

"WILLIAM LAWSON, Attorney."

After several minutes of profound reflection, the Squire knitting his brows and taking up a pen awkwardly and gingerly—he already missed Hugh, who did all the correspondence and what accounts were necessary—wrote in reply,—

"SIR,—Send the girl and the money to me, with your bill, by first conveyance.

"HARRY DARRELL."

This characteristic epistle being despatched, he trudged round his fields as perfect a specimen of the human mule as any naturalist could desire.

Four days after the date of the Squire's letter the afternoon train brought a passenger for Dale and a station fly brought Grace Darrell to her new home.

The Squire stood at the hall door to welcome her, his face twitching with some strong, firmly suppressed emotion, and when she lightly ran up the steps, he took her by the arm and kissed her, speaking never a word until, still holding her arm in a kindly grasp, they reached the drawing-room, then seating himself in his easy-chair he drew her in front of him and said,—

"Let me look at you."

He saw a graceful, strongly built girl with a dark complexion, thick black eyebrows, eyes that had all the Darrell beauty and a mouth that had something more than the Darrell firmness.

The face was neither beautiful nor plain, but it affected the Squire strangely.

"Grace," he said, rather huskily, "you are very like your father."

Now her father had been the Squire's younger brother, and until he made a runaway match with an actress at a provincial theatre, Mr. Darrell had loved him as David loved Jonathan.

The marriage had parted them for ever, Mr. Darrell being too proud to forgive such a *mesalliance*.

Grace dropped her eyes from his face and sighed.

"I do not remember him, uncle," she said.

"No, no," said the Squire, nodding his head, then hastily, as if to hide the tears which sprang to his eye, he added, "There, you must be tired and knocked up, and no wonder either. Mrs. Lucas, the housekeeper, will show you your room."

And kissing her again he half pushed, half led her to the middle-aged woman who acted in the capacity of housekeeper and general manager at the Dale.

Grace Darrell had been brought up in a small, out-of-the-way place in the north of England; she was not accomplished or even highly educated, but her brave spirit and wonderful tact stood her in good stead and prevented her being that miserable thing—a colourless nonentity.

Whatever else she lacked, she did not want originality, as the Squire soon found out, for at dinner, after a little encouragement, she chatted with the freedom of innocence and old acquaintanceship.

"And is this the Dale, Uncle Darrell? It is a very beautiful place—very beautiful. Mrs. Lucas says I may go all over it after dinner, that is if you will let me. Will you?"

"Yes," said the Squire again; "and I'll go with you."

"That's a dear uncle," said the girl, going up to him and laying her hand upon his shoulder;

then looking up suddenly, with a *naïveté* that was irresistible. "You will be very kind to me—won't you?"

"Yes," said the Squire, adding as he read a half-doubting look upon her face—"What makes you ask, my dear?"

"Because—" she commenced, then stopped.

"Go on," said the Squire, drawing her closer to him. "Speak out, my dear; I like people who speak their minds."

And for the moment he thought he was speaking the truth.

"Because," said "Grace, my mother told me you were angry with my father for marrying her, and—"

She stopped as the Squire's face darkened, and shrank away a little, but the cloud disappeared and he said, as cheerily as he could,—

"Never mind all that, my girl; I'll be good to you, and you must love me. Eh, that's a bargain?"

"Yes," said Grace, with serious earnestness, flinging her arms round his neck. "That's a bargain. And now we'll go round the grounds," and she ran to the window.

The Squire had not finished his wine, but he got his hat and with the girl hanging to his arm strode out of the house into the garden.

At almost every step Grace stopped to utter an exclamation of delight and childish glee, the Squire's face sometimes puckering into a smile of pleasure, but soon relapsing into its half-stubborn, half-sad expression.

When she reached the stable, Grace literally refused to move any further.

Her face lit up with delight and longing.

"Oh, uncle, what splendid horses! Oh, how I wish—"

"What?" said the Squire; "are you fond of horses?"

"I love them," she replied, eagerly.

"Oh, oh," said the Squire. "But you cannot ride?"

The girl gave a short laugh and sprang to the head of Hugh's horse, and looked back.

"Can't ride? Yes, I can. Oh, do let me!"

"But you haven't got a saddle," said the Squire, rather staggered at her earnestness.

With the rapidity of thought she caught up a rug, folded it, and flung it across the horse's back.

"There is all the saddle I want," she said. "Do let me ride him across the field—only across the field and back again," she added, coaxingly, running to her uncle and twining her arm within his.

It was useless to stand out against her, and the Squire—pulling a rueful face as he thought of what the country-folks would say of his niece scampering across the four-acre field on a bare-backed horse—gave her a lift up and stood to watch the result, not without sundry misgivings.

With a repetition of the short laugh, which seemed to the Squire rather unpleasantly like Hugh's, she turned the horse's head, and, with a touch of her hand, put him in a gallop across the field.

Calling himself an old idiot for letting the child break her neck, Mr. Darrell ran after her as far as his gout would let him—then pulled up short with a stare of amazement.

Grace sat the horse like an Amazon, controlling him by the stall-bridle as easily as Hugh could have done himself, and with a flushed face and a laugh of joy that was good to hear she brought him back to where the Squire stood.

"Bravo!" said the Squire. "Pray where did you learn to ride, my dear?"

"Oh, I taught myself," replied the girl, jumping down, and patting the horse's back.

"Oh, isn't he a beauty, uncle? But he isn't a lady's horse."

"How do you know?" asked the Squire.

"By the way he gallops," replied the girl. "Is he your's, uncle?"

"No," said the Squire, shortly.

"Whose is he, then?" she asked, lifting her head from where it had been nestling against the animal's back. "Uncle, have you a son?"

"No!" said the Squire, hoarsely. "I had once but—he's dead!"

CHAPTER V.

IN a very few days Grace Darrell was mistress at the Dale, and the Squire, who had hitherto ruled in a most despotic way, found himself most utterly vanquished. His will had to bow to the girl's as completely as an old shaky tree is swayed and bent double by the wind.

It was a new sensation this sudden submission, but the Master of Dale did not altogether dislike it. Who could help loving the dark-eyed young gipsy who stamped her feet and dared you to your very face when you asked her to do anything she disliked or disapproved of, and then, when with a sigh you owned yourself vanquished, threw her arms round your neck and poured a thousand endearments on your head! Certainly not the Squire, much less Mrs. Lucas and the servants, who petted, caressed, and spoiled Grace to her young wilful heart's content—scarcely spoiling her, though, for beneath all her obstinacy, wilfulness, and high spirits there beat a true womanly heart which only required the slightest kindness and show of love to draw out its wealth of affection.

Mrs. Lucas had a sad time of it with Miss Grace, but she loved her with all her matronly heart, and wiped away the tears she often shed for "Poor Master Hugh" when his cousin came bounding down the stairs or rushing into the housekeeper's room.

This same bounding and rushing had been the cause of many scenes between Grace's uncle and herself also. The Squire was not used to being startled out of his life by a sudden entry or exit, and it made his old heart leap into his mouth to hear her jump eight of the wide stairs and alight at the bottom with a crash. Of course he complained rather crossly, but he met with ready response.

"Grace, my girl," he had expostulated, with a frown, as on the second morning she jumped up from the breakfast-table to see something from the window, upsetting the urn and scalding the cat, "Grace, my girl, you must not leap about like that. Look here, you've played the deuce with the breakfast things."

"Oh, so I have. There's a mess. What'll Mrs. Lucas say," and she burst into a merry peal of laughter and stood regarding the wrathful cat and overturned urn with intense enjoyment.

This was rather calculated to make the Squire angry, but he kept his wrath down as he had never done with Hugh, and, trying a different tack, said,—

"Don't laugh, my girl. I can't have you playing harum-scarum tricks like this here. You'll frighten me into my grave before a month's out."

Instantly the laughed ceased and the twinkling eyes became sad ones.

"Oh, uncle, I didn't mean it. Don't you be cross," she said, repentantly, and threw her arms round his neck.

This completely settled the Squire, who kissed her and sent her back to her seat, after extracting a promise of greater caution and quietness.

After his niece had been with him a month Mr. Darrell, who was getting fonder of her than he would have owned, began to think of sending to London for some masters for her. He was a proud man, and he wanted Grace to acquire a few accomplishments and a certain amount of polish before he presented her to his friends.

Besides, now the Squire had given up all hopes of Hugh's return, he had begun to look upon this wild tom-boy of a girl as the heiress to the Dale, and he was anxious that she should be fit for the honour; added to which, although at present Mrs. Lucas and he had managed to keep her within the Dale grounds, the county neighbours were beginning to be curious to see the girl who had supplanted Hugh, and the Squire did not choose that Lady Hastings and Sir Charles Bowden should see the heiress to the Dale in her present uncultivated state.

At first there was considerable difficulty in inducing Grace to avail herself of the masters he provided for her.

Many were the complaints which reached Mr. Darrell from the long suffering preceptors and at last he was obliged to give up the attempt to

make Grace into an accomplished young lady, and to be content with her as she was.

He was wonderfully yielding and considerate to the orphan girl. If he had displayed half the patience with poor Hugh that he practised with wilful Grace, there would have been a lighter heart in his own breast, and no such name as "Laurence Harman" on the roll-book of the *Mary Ann*.

Two months after Grace's arrival, the Squire one fine morning determined to take her to the Warren, as Miss Rebecca Goodman's place was called, to introduce her to his neighbour.

The Squire had not seen Rebecca since Hugh's departure; at first he had felt too sore to look upon the woman who had unintentionally caused the separation from his son, but he was glad now, of this excuse for calling on her.

Rebecca Goodman was, with the rest of his acquaintance, rather afraid of the Squire, and received them rather uneasily. She was a slight, pale little woman, with timid, frightened eyes, and a manner at once conciliating and gentle—a good little being, but not the woman to win the heart of such a man as Hugh.

"So this is Miss Grace," she said, stooping to kiss that young lady, who took the caress rather frigidly, and stared about her with her dark eyes in a curious manner.

"Yes, Rebecca," said the Squire, with something like a smothered sigh, "this is my niece." Then turning to Grace, who was now scrutinizing the pale face before her with unblinking minuteness, "This lady is a great friend of mine. You must be great friends with her."

"Perhaps she won't like me," said Grace, rather pertinently.

"Oh, yes, my dear," said Miss Rebecca, very much startled, and taking Grace's hand. "We shall be very great friends, Squire, I have no doubt."

"Hem!" said the Squire, in his short way, feeling rather doubtful for his part of anyone being able to stand Grace except himself.

"Well," said the Squire, after a little more small talk of a very broken sort, for both were thinking of the forbidden topic—Hugh, "we must be going. Come, Grace."

But Grace had taken up her position at the table, and without lifting her eyes from a large book of illustrated travels, refused to move.

"I don't want to go, Uncle Harry," she said, quietly. "I'd rather stay here."

The Squire sighed. He did not want to fight the usual battle with his wayward charge before Rebecca.

"But you don't know whether Miss Goodman will have you," he said.

Grace looked up into the timid face of Rebecca and answered, confidently,—

"Oh yes, she will, Uncle Harry. Won't you, Miss Goodman?"

"Yes, my dear," said Miss Rebecca. "Let her spend the day with me, Squire."

"But I wanted to take her to the Branton's."

"I won't go," said Grace, in parenthesis.

"Take her there to-morrow," said Rebecca; and the Squire, very much put out, trudged away without Grace.

When he had gone, Miss Rebecca walked up to Grace, and patting her arm in a way which the young girl quite appreciated, said,—

"Well, my dear, do you like pictures?"

"Some," said Grace. "These are rare fine ones."

Miss Rebecca was shocked.

"You—you shouldn't say that," she said.

"What!" asked Grace, looking up with a frown of astonishment.

Miss Rebecca, who had not seen her face to so much advantage before, stopped in her intended reproof, and looked away with a sigh. The dark frown was too like Hugh's for the poor lady's equanimity.

"What's the matter?" said Grace, upon whom nothing, not the most fleeting expression was lost. "What did you sigh for? Did I say anything wicked? Because I always do—so Mr. Dewlop says."

"Who is Mr. Dewlop?" asked Rebecca, avoiding her question.

"He was my tutor. He's gone now. I'm glad of it. I hated him."

"Hush," said Rebecca. "You mustn't say that. It's very wicked to hate anyone."

"But I can't help it," said Grace, nodding her head decidedly. "It ain't wicked if you can't help it. I hate everybody, almost."

"Oh, that's very wicked!" said Rebecca, feeling a sort of womanly pity for the poor untought child. "Suppose everyone hated you; how miserable you would be."

"Well, they do!" said Grace, "except my uncle and Mrs. Lucas. I daresay they'll hate me too in time."

"I hope not," said Miss Rebecca, gently. "And Grace, I do not hate you."

"Don't you?" said Grace. "Well, I like you for that—"

"Oh, I'm glad you don't hate me!" said Rebecca smiling, but so sadly and mournfully that Grace, turning from her picture-book, to kiss her hostess, then she asked—

"What makes you look so sad? Are you all alone in this big house?"

This was a question hard to answer, since it was impossible to disobey the Squire's orders and speak to Grace of her unknown cousin, the true heir of Dale, but now a poor outcast no one knew where.

Presently the book was exhausted, and Grace looked around for further amusement.

Rebecca, responding to the look, rose and went to the piano.

"Can you play, my dear?" she asked Grace.

"No," said Grace, emphatically.

"That is a pity," said Rebecca.

"Why?" asked Grace, opening her eyes.

"Why?" repeated Rebecca, rather nonplussed.

"Why—don't you like music, my dear?"

"I don't know," said Grace.

And it was the truth, for the unfortunate professor who had attempted to teach her music had utterly neglected to arouse her love for it by playing to her.

Rebecca commenced playing, and Grace leant her head upon her hands and fixed her large eyes upon the lady's pale face.

"Go on," said Grace, imperatively, as after playing one of Mozart's sonatas, Rebecca paused.

Smiling at the tone of the request, Miss Goodman opened a collection of simple ballads, and sang one—a pathetic old air that had been a favourite of Hugh's, who could always be got to listen to it when other things charmed in vain.

Rebecca, who had not a powerful or particularly good voice, yet sang well enough to enapture this uncultivated specimen of humanity.

When she had finished Grace remained silent for a moment, then burst into tears, which dismayed simple minded Rebecca.

"Oh, my dear," she commenced, rising, and drawing the child towards her, but Grace didn't like to be pitied and stamped her foot.

"Go on!" she cried, drying her tears and frowning. "I'm not crying. Why don't you go on? I like it. I like it."

Rebecca, as much afraid of her passion as alarmed at her tears, handed her the portfolio, saying—

"There, my dear, choose a song for me."

Grace, though she knew not a note of music, commenced reading the titles gravely. Presently she stopped and uttered a sudden exclamation, pointing to the name "Hugh Darrell," written on the top of one of the songs. It was one he had lent in a fit of good humour to Rebecca.

"Who's that?" asked Grace. "Hugh Darrell. That must be Uncle Harry's son."

"Yes," said Rebecca.

"Did you know him?" asked Grace.

"Yes," again replied Rebecca, striking the keys with trembling hands.

"What was he like?" asked Grace. "How old was he? Was he good-looking, strong, and brave, as a man ought to be?"

"Yes," said poor Rebecca. "He was the handsomest man—boy—in Dale, the bravest and best in England."

"And he died," said Grace, thoughtfully. "Everybody seems to die that I like."

"But," said Rebecca, startled out of her tears, "you never saw him."

"No," said Grace, "of course not. How long ago did he die?"

"Oh, long, long ago," said Rebecca, and, fearful lest another question should break the back of her endurance, she rose hastily, and, taking Grace's hand, said,—

"Come, my dear, come, and let me show you The Warren."

CHAPTER VI.

THE Hermit Club was a very up-to-date establishment. The Hermits did not favour the long serge robes and hempen girdles of their original namesakes, but were attired in the latest fashion.

In the billiard-room a dozen gentlemen were playing pool—pool at £5 a-life—playing it too in the most approved fashion, that is without the slightest appearance of interest, although an unguarded flash of the eyes when a man succeeded in potting his adversary's ball, or a sharp frown when a life was lost, showed that the languor and indifference were only skin deep and assumed.

Upon one of the sofas ranged round the billiard-room there lay extended at full length a fine-looking man with the regular features and well-made figure which generally win the good opinion of the opposite sex and the title of "handsome."

His eyes were closed. He took no notice of the pool, pool at five-pounds-a-life being played by a dozen or so of his fellow-members, though the perpetual click of the balls, and the conversation of the players must have prevented anyone dozing but a very somnolent individual, and Reginald Dartmouth was anything but that.

Game after game went on, and still Captain Dartmouth lay on the soft velvet apparently unconscious and asleep, and he would probably have lain there until the clock had struck his usual retiring hour, but suddenly the door was burst open and a slight built young fellow entered, and nodding to the players with a pleasant smile went up to the sofa, and clapping the Captain on the shoulder with a laugh, said,—

"Hullo, Reggie, asleep as usual? Why aren't you playing?"

"Tired of it; I won three pools. What's the time?"

"Twenty past one," replied Charlie. "I shall be getting home. Are you going my way?—I've got my cab at the door."

"As well your way as any other," replied Captain Dartmouth carelessly.

"Come on, then," said Charlie Anderson. "The cab is a fidgety beast."

At the door, Sir Charlie Anderson's cab was waiting, and the two getting in were hurled away at steam-engine pace by the "fidgety" cab.

"Charlie, what do you want with me to-night?" said Captain Dartmouth, when he had made himself comfortable in one corner.

"Why, how the deuce did you know I wanted you?" asked the young Baronet, with admiring surprise. "But the truth is, I've got some news for you. You know I've a sort of cousin down in the West, rather *passé*, though she's a nice little thing, quiet, and the rest of it, and a deal better than most of the run now-a-days."

"Yes," assented the Captain, as a gentle hint.

"She writes to me pretty regularly, and—and was very kind and liberal with her money—she's got lots of it—when I was thinly feathered. This morning I got a letter from her that contains some news more interesting to you than to me."

The Captain nodded, but closed his eyes, looking as if nothing on the earth, the heavens above, or the waters under the earth could interest him.

It seems that a neighbour of her's, Squire Darrell, of the Dale, has had a terrible row with his son, and cut him off—turned him out, in fact."

The Captain opened his eyes and knocked the ash off his cigar again.

"That isn't all. It seems that the stupid fellow—the son I mean—instead of hanging about until the old boy worked round, cleared

right off in the most unaccountable way and hasn't been heard of since. The dad, naturally riled at such beastly unreasonable conduct, adopts a niece of his, and proclaims her his heiress. Well, I thought, 'By Jove! Reggie would like to hear of this,' because I remembered hearing you say you were some relation of the Darrells, and I fancied there might be a chance for you."

"I doubt it," said Captain Reginald.

"Well," said Charlie Anderson, good-humouredly, "won't you try? Darrell's a near relation, isn't he?"

"Uncle."

"By Jove! you ought to have a shot, old man. Go down and marry the girl."

"Thanks. I have an objection to bread-and-butter school-girls, they are insipid and abominable. I prefer, if the choice is a necessity, a Red Indian squaw."

And yet the Captain's last act that night was to order his man to pack up, as he wished to catch an early train for Dale in the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

To return to Hugh Darrell. For the first few days the wonderful novelty of his new position drove some of his sad reflections to the wind.

Laurence Harman, to use his assumed name, was strong, or he never could have got through the duties he had undertaken. He knew nothing of seamanship, but he was quick of sight, and could climb the tall masts and hoist the heavy sails as well as the best man on board after a few days' practice.

This strength and tact made him a favourite with the crew, who at first were rather inclined to resent his silence and moodiness. They could not but respect a man who never refused to give them a helping hand or relieve them of a watch, although he never addressed a genial word to them or even smiled.

The Captain was a little puzzled to "make him out," as he said, and on the fourth day, meeting Laurence as he was coiling a rope on deck, he stopped and asked him a few questions.

"How are you getting on, my man?"

"Thank you, sir," replied Laurence, "very well."

"Getting into the way of the rounds, eh?"

Laurence nodded.

"Yes," he said, "as well as I can hope."

"That's right," said the Captain, cheerily, striking him on the back. "If there's anything wrong, anything you want, come to me for it, will you?"

Laurence thanked him gratefully and the Captain passed on, wondering who and what the "landsman" was.

After eight days' fair sailing the *Mary Ann* met with contrary winds, that compelled her to tack. These contrary winds grew into a storm, and in the middle of the night all hands were ordered up to reef and make tight.

It was a perilous task, but the men, used to risking their lives, flew cheerily to the masts and climbed aloft.

At their head was Laurence, who was seldom anywhere else.

The Captain, catching sight of him, stopped suddenly on his way to the stern, and, casting a glance at the heavy clouds, that seemed almost touching the tops of the plunging and rocking masts, said:

"Harman, lend a hand here."

Laurence dropped lightly from the part of the rigging he had just reached and came up to him.

"Yes, sir."

"You'd better not go up, my man," said the Captain, "as you're not used to it."

Laurence threw back his head with a gesture of impatience.

"I am not afraid, sir," he said, looking up at the flapping sails. "I'd rather go up, with your leave."

"Hem! Well, go on," said the Captain, gruffly, not liking to be thwarted in his kind intention.

"Only have a care."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Laurence, sailor fashion, as he sprang towards the mast.

"That's a plucky chap," muttered the Captain as he watched Laurence make his way up the mast hand over hand, seemingly undaunted by the howling of the tempest and the sharp, cutting rain that dashed against his bare chest—"wonderfully plucky for a land lubber."

Meanwhile Laurence had reached the top yards, and, with numbed fingers, was reefing the sails.

It was his first storm, and notwithstanding his natural courage and pluck he felt a queer sensation about his heart.

He dared not look down—the deck seemed miles below him, and he felt half blinded and senseless with the pitiless blast and the howling of the wind and waves. But the boatswain's call reminded him of his duty, and, hastily finishing his task, he prepared to descend.

His cold, senseless fingers could scarcely distinguish the ropes, but he reached the last yard safely, and was grasping the ladder to run and drop the rest when a sharp cry rose from the deck:

"Man overboard!"

It sent his heart into his mouth, and springing to the side as quickly as the lurching and plunging of the vessel would let him, he tried to pierce the sullen gloom.

By dint of hard straining he could distinguish a black speck upon the foam of the waves. It was the head of the drowning man.

He looked round for a rope, and, slipping the noose end round his waist, leapt upon the bulwark.

A hand grasped him roughly by the arm and pulled him down.

It was the Captain. Their voices could scarcely be heard, but Laurence caught the words "No use!" and with a shout of derision he, forgetful of his position, hurled, the Captain to the deck and sprang overboard in the direction of the drowning man.

The Captain, who could not afford to lose two of his men, with heavy weather looming ahead, and having besides a strong admiration for the bravery of the landsman, sprang to the wheel and brought the vessel round a little, while half a dozen sailors who had witnessed the accident and Laurence's reckless attempt at rescue hurried to the stern and shouted with all their might and main to Laurence to turn back.

Suddenly one of the men caught sight of the rope, and, just in time, seized and fastened it to a bulkhead.

Meanwhile, utterly disregarding the frantic shouts of warning, Laurence fought his way to the black speck.

Fortunately the man was almost as good a swimmer as himself, and the waves that buffeted Laurence back bore him nearer the vessel.

As they approached each other Laurence saw that the poor fellow's face was white, almost blue, and that in another moment he would be beaten. Though nearly exhausted he exerted himself for one last effort, and struck out strongly.

At that moment he felt a sudden strain upon the rope, and knew that the men on board were pulling him.

The poor dying man saw it too, and with a look of wild, helpless agony in his face, turned over on his back.

Laurence, maddened by every tug of the rope that drew him away, suddenly lifted it over his head, and, released, caught at the hair of the drowning man.

The sailors on board, feeling the strain suddenly loosened, looked at each other aghast; but the Captain, who dared not leave the wheel, shouted in the ear of one,—

"The idiot has let go the rope. He'll be drowned as safe as a gun."

A boat was launched and manned with strong arms who battled hard to reach the spot where the two men were struggling; but before they could do so Laurence, still grasping the man's hair, had regained the rope, and the sailors, with a hearty cheer, pulled them in.

The two were carried to their berths more dead than alive, and then the crew were hard at work

again, for the storm, which had lulled for a little while, suddenly raged more fiercely than before, and orders were issued for clearing the rigging and cutting down a mast.

Responding as cheerfully to this ominous command as if they were summoned to receive an extra ration, the sailors swarmed to the task. Then a few had to be told off to clear the decks, for the miserable emigrants, to the number of forty or fifty, were crowding everywhere, shrieking for help, and clinging, when they could, to the Captain or any of the crew.

In the middle of the din, as the passengers were being driven like a herd of sheep down the cabin-ways, Laurence crawled on deck—the ship lurched too much and he was too weak for a moment or two to reach it in any other way.

The men were busy cutting away the mast with their axes. He caught up one, but found his arm unable to swing it, and set himself to the task of keeping the deck clear.

After a deal of persuading and threatening the emigrants were got below, and Laurence stopped for a moment to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

At that moment the Captain called to him to come and take the wheel and so liberate him.

As he grasped it the Captain looked at him with a curious look.

"You don't seem much put out with the gale, my man," he said.

Laurence shook his head moodily.

"No," he said, "it is all one to me."

The Captain shook his head gravely and made his way forward. Presently he came back.

"They have got the mast clear," he said. "Ten minutes will decide it," and he looked anxiously up at the black sky.

"Where are we?" asked Laurence, carelessly.

"Heaven knows!" replied the Captain. "I am keeping due west, but why I could scarcely tell you."

"We have lost our reckoning then, sir?" said Laurence.

"Yes; Heaven help us!" nodded the Captain, gloomily.

"Good-bye to the Dale for ever then!" muttered the young fellow, and he turned away.

But the storm gave way as suddenly as it had commenced. The heavens lightened; the clouds dispersed as if by magic, and a soft breeze taking the place of the boisterous gale fanned them gently into a harbour towards which they had been driving the whole night through.

For the rest of the voyage Laurence Harman was the hero of the *Mary Ann*, and when he landed at Cape Town the sailors parted with him amidst a hearty round of cheers.

Their simple affection moved the solitary outcast, and he turned from the quay with eyes too blinded by the sudden tears to look about him for a moment or so.

When he did look round he was startled. The scene that met his eyes was so unlike any he had ever witnessed that he could only stand still and gaze in wonderment.

From this attitude he was aroused by a chorus of Kaffirs, who thronged round him and offered to carry his luggage. This offer, having no luggage of any kind, he of course refused, and walked up to the middle of the town, which seemed very different from what he had expected.

At the back rose a range of majestic hills, some of them flat-topped like a table, all well wooded and beautiful.

Laurence, feeling very lonely and strange, walked through one of the streets, and seeing a man standing in a square place with about a dozen splendid horses round him, asked him if he knew Stewart's Corner.

The man, a thick, burly fellow, dressed in a loose linen shirt, open at the chest, and a pair of rough tanned skin breeches, in the girdle of which stuck a revolver and a large, formidable-looking bowie knife, paused in his examination of a horse's foot and shook his head.

"What is't, a station?" he asked.

"Yes," said Laurence, seating himself on a block of wood and looking at the horses with a critical eye.

"Well, I guess I don't remember," said the cattle-minder, "but most like one of the niggers

will," and picking up a whip which lay on the ground he clacked it.

In an instant as if by magic half-a-dozen black fellows started from out-of-the-way holes and crevices, beneath the horses, from under rugs and bales of cotton, and crowded round.

"Where be Stewart's Corner, Sam?" asked the man, stooping down to the horse's hoofs again.

The Hottentot opened his mouth very wide and then took to staring at Laurence, seemingly forgetting the question as soon as it was asked.

Not hearing him answer the horseman looked up and caught him a sharp cut across the bare shoulders.

"Hi! darn your sleepy head! wake up, will you? Where be Stewart's Corner, you woolly-headed lunatic?"

"Hi! hi!" screamed the Hottentot. "Stewart's Corner am by the Hartebeeste River. 'Um gen'lman want um go!"

"Yes," said Laurence, interested and amused at the strange race and strange manners, "yes, I do."

"Well, um go to Baas Stewart's stand in the corner there, and wait till Baas Stewart's horses come up from the country."

Laurence did not understand, and looked as he did not.

"That woolly-headed idiot means that you will have to wait at that rail there," explained the man, pointing to another enclosed space, "until Stewart's man arrives. He's coming up with horses to pick up cattle and men, I suppose, to-day. Eh, Sam?"

"Yup, yup!" said the Hottentot, showing his teeth.

"Thank you," said Laurence. "What's the matter with the horse? Something in the frog?"

"Spect so," said the horseman. "I can't see as well as I could one time. This blarried climate is enough to roast your eyes completely out sometimes."

"Let me look," said Laurence, and he knelt down beside him. "Ah, here is the mischief," he exclaimed, pulling out a small thorn.

"Thank ye, thank ye," said the man, with rough gratitude, and, made more friendly by Laurence's kindness, he pulled out a flask from his belt and held it out with the curt explanation,—

"Brandy!"

Laurence just wet his lips, he knew better than to refuse, and giving him good-day walked over to the other enclosure.

CHAPTER VIII.

LAURENCE seated himself upon one of the thick blocks of wood, prepared to wait the arrival of Mr. Stewart's man.

He had not to wait long. Before he was half tired of watching the odd groups of people that passed him—stout, well-to-do colonials, rough, skin-clad, revolver-wearing cattle runners, and gangs of natives—a cloud of dust rising in the distance attracted his attention, and, watching it until it resolved itself into a long string of splendid and valuable horses, he was agreeably surprised to find the horseman at their head pull up his fiery steed at the foot of the enclosure.

Instantly half-a-dozen coloured boys leaped from the horses at the rear, and joined by their lounging brethren clustered round their chief, waiting for orders.

Twisting the long thong of his whip round the handle, this individual gave some commands to one of the men, and then turned to Laurence with a look of inquiry.

"I was directed to wait here for Mr. Stewart's man," he said, in answer to the glance.

"I'm one o' Stewart's runners," replied the man, jerking up his trousers and glancing at the well-built form and broad, bronzed chest of the speaker, with critical eyes. "What might you want?"

"I want to see Mr. Stewart," said Laurence.

"Ah," said the runner. "Well, the station is

six days' trot from here. I'm up here to get the mails and pick up any men. I go back to-morrow, though, and you can come along an' so be you likes."

Laurence accepted the offer with thanks.

"What time shall I be here?" he asked.

"We start at sunrise," said the runner, then added, roughly: "P'raps you've only just landed!"

"I have," said Laurence.

"Ah, you'd better come along o' me," rejoined the runner. "You're a stranger in these parts, and mayn't be up to the ways. If you like to share with me to-night, I can take you to a comfortable sup and a shakedown in some hay."

This offer Laurence accepted gratefully, and, after seeing the horses led away to a lot of hay thrown down some little distance off, the runner, accompanied by Laurence, went on to the quay.

Having found no men to suit his taste, he repaired thence to a small public-house, half cottage, half hut, and, as he had promised, shared his supper and hay with Laurence.

At sunrise Laurence was awakened by the barking of countless dogs, the clacking of the long whips, and the chattering of the Hottentots.

Hastily washing himself at a small stream, he hurried to the enclosure and found his friend the runner already marshalling his *cortège*.

It was a splendid sight, that long line of handsome animals prancing and pawing the ground, throwing up their shining heads, and shaking their flowing manes.

Laurence's heart, for the first time for a long while, stirred within him, and he longed to leap on the back of one of them and gallop away—away—anywhere from the bitter past and his sad thoughts.

"Hullo," said the runner. "Wondered where you'd got to. We're ready, you see. Here, Tim, bring the black round," and he pointed to a tall, powerful-looking horse at that moment on its hind legs.

"Can you ride?"

"Yes," said Laurence.

"Well, here's a critter as can carry you," said the runner, throwing a thick rug across his back.

Laurence sprang across it, and grasped the bridle with a flash of delight.

It did not last a second, but the runner noticed it and nodded approval.

"All right," he muttered; "you'll do."

Then there ensued a terrific din, shouting, yelling, barking, whip-cracking, and at the last moment the six Hottentots leaped on their horses and the cavalcade started.

Unencumbered by heavy saddles, of splendid breed, and used to running swiftly for long and weary distances, the horses seemed to fly.

Cape Town was quickly left behind, an open plateau reached, and then a dense wood with but a small path cut clear for the Indian file which the horses instantly and without any instructions formed.

Here the most glowing vegetation, the most beautiful and vivid perfumes, and, above all, the most delicious bird melody he had ever heard, greeted Laurence.

He was delighted. It seemed fairyland. His companion, riding on in front, took the scenery and its delights as a matter of course, and Laurence caught himself wondering at his indifference. He little thought how soon he likewise would view the loveliest of Nature's handiwork with indifferent carelessness.

At night they left the forest, and pulled up at the foot of some rocks.

Here the boys lit a fire, and set to work cooking some buck steaks, the runner standing by with his long whip under his arm, and viewing the operations with the air of a prince.

Laurence leant against his horse, and gazed round him and upon the group beneath his eyes with the most acute interest.

From his reverie he was awakened by the runner, who clapped him on the back and invited him to sup.

Nothing loth, Laurence threw himself down on the soft, spring grass, and ate his share of the juicy steak with relish, then, declining the draught of brandy which the friendly runner

offered him, he rose and leant a hand at securing the horses for the night, which was done by tying the bridles to small pickets driven firmly into the ground.

Then, as the moon rose above the trees, he curled himself up in his rug beside the fire, and listened to the snoring of his companions.

He could not sleep himself, because his brain was too busy. At this period he seemed to need more than a double quantity of brain and a double pair of eyes to see and understand all the wondrous sights of the new and strange land.

On the morrow at sunrise, after a breakfast that was but a repetition of the last night's supper, they were on the gallop again.

At first the country was more open, but soon it became rockier, and at last, towards evening, the dark outline of another forest appeared in view.

"That there is the Black Forest," said the runner, pointing to it. "We shall have to skirt a little for bucks—these rascals have run short, they tell me. If you've a mind to try your luck with a hundred-yarder, p'raps you'll come along."

Laurence accepted eagerly; but said, with regret, that he had no gun.

"Here, Tim, bring the hundred-yards," said the runner, and a little Hottentot boy galloped up with a gun which the runner handed to Laurence. "We allers bring a good supply," he said, passing him some ammunition, "for we don't never know as we shan't want it."

Laurence thanked him, and following his directions, paired off with two of the elder natives towards the east, while the runner bore for the west.

As they entered the forest the natives tied the three horses to a tree, and, carefully noting the place, crept along, with Laurence at their heels, examining the ground at every foot.

Presently the foremost one held up his hand, and then fell flat upon the ground.

Scarcely had Laurence time to follow his example—the other native having dropped almost at the same moment—when a peculiar crackling of the branches and underbrush was heard, and suddenly, like a vision of the fancy, a herd of antelopes came flitting through the deep glade.

With the quickness of lightning he raised his gun and marked the foremost one. There was a sharp crash, echoed all round the vast wood, and the graceful beast gave a leap into the air.

Laurence was about to spring forward, but the natives held him back, whispering—

"Sh! sh! Him not dead enough. Him rip baas up."

Laurence waited a few minutes which seemed ages, and then, with his knife ready in his hand, ran to the fallen antelope. It was dead, but to make certainty more doubly sure, he plunged the deep-bladed knife in the noble neck, and then assisted the natives to carry the prize to the open.

There they found the runner with a fine buck which he had shot, and, slinging the two across two of the spare horses, they went on their way.

The runner seemed rather surprised at Laurence's good fortune, and evidently thought more highly of him, for he grew somewhat more talkative and inquisitive.

When they alighted in a clear space, after having ridden thirty miles, and the natives set about preparing dinner, the runner stooped to examine the antelope which Laurence had shot, and said, curiously—

"That's a good shot."

"I am glad you think so," said Laurence.

"And you can ride, too," said the runner.

"What might be your name?"

"Laurence Harman," was the reply.

"Oh," said the runner, "one of 'em 'll do for our fellows. L-o-r-e-n-c-e, how do you spell it?"

Laurence spelt it for him.

"Ah," said the runner, "it's a gimcrack name, but you can't help that, can yer? A chap doesn't give himself his own name, more's the pity sometimes. My name's Jack Long, Jack I'm called; that's short if it ain't sweet."

Laurence nodded.

"It's both," he said, "and a better one than

mine, which you can alter for any other you like.

"Thiankee," said the man. "Maybe I shall. Now then, you rascals," addressing the natives, "where's the grub?"

The steaks were soon done, and proved very acceptable. Laurence enjoyed his portion none the less for having earned it.

After dinner the runner Jack offered his pipe to Laurence, but he refused to deprive him of it, and Jack, taking the refusal in good part, smoked it himself, eyeing Laurence with an increased interest, for a man who could refuse a pipe was a curious piece of humanity in his eyes worth looking at.

Towards the close of the sixth day the cavalcade approached its destination.

The towering hills and thick forests gave place to miles of springy, emerald pasture, upon whose soft, velvety bosom grew a wealth of many-coloured flowers, here and there bent down and broken by the tread of many herds of cattle and the ruts of the heavy waggons.

Soon the tracks on the grass grew thicker and more frequent, and presently the station came in sight.

Laurence uttered an exclamation of surprise and delight, for before him lay an earthly Paradise—green grass, bright flowers, studded by cattle, horses, and sheep in thousands, backed by a distant range of tree-covered hills, and, like a small scrap of canvas cut from an artist's picture, a picturesque farmhouse, built of wood and rough white stone, rearing its head in the middle of the plain, and sheltered by a group of noble trees.

At its side ran a silver, bubbling brook; around it rose majestic hay-ricks, and every-where there met the view the wealth of the colonist—horses and cattle.

At the sound of the horses' hoofs, patterring over the rough, beaten road, a small crowd of natives ran, shouting, to meet them, followed, more leisurely, by half-a-dozen men, runners, built and dressed on the model of Jack.

Laurence looked round with deep and heart-swelling emotion.

"This is Paradise!" he exclaimed.

"It be Stewart's Corner," grinned Jack, and, with a final crack of his whip, he leapt to the ground before the door of the homestead, the natives rushing at each other with questions and welcomes, and hastily unfastening the horses and leading them off.

(To be continued.)

THERE are many quaint customs connected with the birth of the year. At Coventry it used to be and maybe is, customary to eat a particular form of pastry called god-cakes, no doubt registered by the Folk Lore Society, on New Year's Day. At Hilton, in Staffordshire, the lord of the neighbouring manor of Essington had to bring a goose to Hilton and drive it three times round the hall fire, while a hollow brass image, called "Jack," filled with water, was blowing off steam. The lord of Essington had then to deliver the bird to the cook, and when dressed had to convey the dish to his lord paramount.

THERE is a very pretty German tradition, not generally known, which accounts in the following manner for the existence of the moss rose. The legend is to the effect that once upon a time an angel having a mission of love to suffering humanity, came down on earth. He was much grieved at all the sin and misery he saw, and at all the evil things he heard. Being tired, he sought a place wherein to rest, but, as it fared with his Master, so it fared with him; there was no room for him, and no one would give him shelter. At last he lay down under the shade of a rose, and slept till the rising sun awoke. Before winging his flight heavenward he addressed the rose, and said that as it had given him that shelter which man denied, it should receive an enduring token of his power and love. And so, leaf by leaf, and twig by twig, the soft, green moss grew round the stem, and there it is to this day, a cradle in which the new-born rose may lie, a proof, as the angel said, of God's power and love.

FACETIE.

"I know I'm a little irritable, John, but if I had to live my life again, I'd marry you just the same." "H'm! I have my doubts about it."

"Just think—" began Mrs. Wickwire. "Guess I'll have to. I never get a chance to do anything else when you have started in to talk," said her husband.

HE: "And you refuse me!" SHE: "I do." HE: "Pardon the seeming curiosity, but how many times do you usually refuse a chap before you accept him?"

FOND PARENT: "I cannot interfere, Bobby; your teacher writes me that she thrashed you on principle." BOBBY: "Well, she didn't. Don't you think I know where she licked me?"

SHE (inquiringly): "Why was this game called poker, Charley?" HE (ruefully): "I don't know, unless it is that you are apt to burn your fingers when you get the wrong end of it."

"Don't you," said the pious landlady to the boarder, "believe that all flesh is grass?" "No," hesitated the boarder; as he took another hold on his knife, "I think some of it is leather."

MR. SAPHHEAD (during the honeymoon): "When did my little ducky darling first discover that she loved me?" BRIDE (sweetly): "When I found myself getting mad every time any one called you a fool."

MISTRESS: "I don't want you to have so much company. You have more callers in a day than I have in a week." DOMESTIC: "Well, mum, perhaps if you'd try to be a little more agreeable you'd have as many friends as I have."

"WHAT is the meaning of the word 'tantalizing'?" inquired the teacher. "Please, ma'am," said Johnny, "it means a procession passing the schoolhouse, and the scholars not allowed to look out."

JONES: "Where's the pretty girl I saw you with yesterday?" BROWN (crossly): "That was my wife." JONES: "Well, isn't she a pretty girl just the same?" BROWN: "Um—er—um—yes, I suppose so; but that's different."

ARRIVAL (at 1 A.M.): "Can I sleep here all night?" CLERK: "No, sir." ARRIVAL: "What's the matter? House full?" CLERK: "No, sir; it's one o'clock in the morning." ARRIVAL: "Oh, ah!"

MOTHER: "Tommy, if you don't stop crying I shall be compelled to whip you." THOMAS (aged six): "Mother! How illogical! Does it not occur to you that a severe castigation will only have the effect of increasing the volume of sound I may be producing?"

HE: "Would you consider it an impertinent question if I should ask you to marry me?" SHE: "Certainly not. And would you consider it a pertinent answer, if I should say 'no'?" HE: "Certainly not." SHE: "Well?" HE: "Well!" And so they were married.

YOUNG PODDLERKINS: "Watch that Japanese fellow bow and smile when I speak to him. Hello, Jappy! How! There did you see him! Isn't a Jap a peculiar creature, anyhow?" MISS QUICK: "Yes, I have noticed it. One peculiarity about a Japanese is, that he is always a gentleman."

SHE (looking over the autumn landscape): "Isn't it perfectly beautiful, George?" HE: "It is simply delicious! I could gaze on it for hours. Do you know that every time I look on those gloriously tinted autumn leaves they remind me of you?" SHE: "In what way?" HE: "They look as if they appealed to one to be pressed."

IN shutting down the lid of the wife's trunk, locking it, and wrapping the trunk securely with ropes and leather straps for the purpose of making the structure baggageman-proof, Mr. McSWAT had consumed half-an-hour. "Now, Lobelia," he said, after he had loaded the thing into the express wagon, and sent it to the railway-station, "you have just three-quarters of an hour to get ready, go to the depot, and have your trunk checked. Got your ticket handy?" "The ticket!" replied Mrs. McSWAT. "That's all safe enough. It's in the trunk."

A CAUTIOUS PURCHASER: "I don't like to buy any damaged goods," said Mrs. Newmummy, to the dealer who had urged her to purchase a fine copy of the Venus of Milo, "but if you can replace that arm so that it can't be detected, I am willing to give you half price for the statue."

MISTRESS: "What did you do with that old brown dress that hung in my closet?" DOMESTIC: "You told me to get rid of all the rags, ma'am, and so I gave it to the ragman. Mistress: "Goodness me! How do you suppose I am ever to get any new clothes if I haven't an old dress to put on when my husband comes home?"

SCENE: Dublin Express. Young Lady pleasantly offers her weekly pound and a half of advertisements and puffs to Elderly Spinster. Elderly Spinster (sourly): "Thanks; I never read frivolous literature." Young Lady (sweetly, and showing her the portraits of brides): "And yet they convey a consoling moral lesson. No pretty girl ever seems to get married."

TEACHER: "Parse the sentence, 'Yucatan is a peninsula.' Pupil (who could never understand grammar, anyhow): "Yucatan is a proper noun, noun-tive case, second person singular—" "How do you make that out?" "First person Icatan, second person Yucatan, third person Hecatan; plural, first person Weccatan, second per—" "Go to your seat."

HOUSEKEEPER: "It's perfectly abominable! Why don't you go to work and earn your living?" TRAMP: "Please, mum, if such gent as me should go to work what would the newspaper paragraphers do for subjects to write about? They'd starve to death, mum; and, with no jokes in the papers, this dreary life would be but a vale of tears. We all have our uses, mum."

AT a recent council meeting in the town of Sunderland a well-known alderman astonished the meeting by saying: "Gentlemen, we have been sending our lunatics to Sedgfield Asylum for a long time now, and it has cost us a great sum of money; but I am glad to make the statement that we have now built an asylum for ourselves." Sensation!

"SHE has discarded me," wailed the young man. "I have half a notion to shoot myself." "When you entertain such an idea as that," replied the sage, "you are under-estimating your affection." "Don't you mean over-estimating?" "Well, you may be over-estimating its intensity, but not its quantity. Just you wait awhile and you will find you have love enough left for half a dozen girls."

"MADAM, I—I—must apologize. My—my seven children, and—it's hard times, you know—and—" "Poor fellow! Here's a trifle for you. And now tell me how old are the poor little dears?" "Thank ye, mum. Well, Bill he's thirty-two, 'n Mary's twenty-seven and married. The other five's dead, mum. 'N Bill 'n Mary says I'm too lazy to live, mum; they're that ungrateful. Thank ye again, mum."

"SLEEP!" echoed the portly gentleman, to a question the man in the next seat had put to him, "sleep! I sleep all night like a baby." "Whose baby?" queried a nervous, harassed-looking fellow, with a strange glitter in his eyes. "Whose baby, I say?" he repeated, in harsh, grating tones, that alarmed every passenger in the car, for they did not know he had been a parent only a year.

A WELL-KNOWN missionary had occasion to give a description of his foreign work to a large audience in a certain town. While speaking, he took particular notice of a boy who was listening with rapt attention to every word the lecturer said. As usual, in such addresses, he wound up with an earnest appeal for contributions, however small, and, thinking of his wide-mouthed listener, he added that even children might give their mite. When the meeting was over the boy mounted the platform and going forward to the lecturer said, "Please, sir, I was very much interested in your lecture, and—and—" Here he hesitated. "Go on, my little man," said the missionary. "You want to help in the good work?" "No, not that," replied the boy. "What I want to know is, have you any foreign stamps you could give a fellow?"

THE little daughter of a learned professor of Old Testament literature was being questioned by her mother recently on the history of David and Goliath. They had got as far as the cutting off of Goliath's head, and the next question was "And what happened then?" This was a puzzler; but some experience from similar dealings with her dollies came to her aid, and with a triumphant smile she exclaimed, "Why then all the sawdust came out."

AT a reception at one of the fashionable homes in the west end a gentleman asked the hostess who the lady was standing near the mantel. She replied: "Why, don't you know! This is Mrs. Conduit-Smith." The gentleman made a few well chosen remarks and then said: "I must say I admire Mrs. Smith very much." "Oh, my," cried the lady, "you must not say Mrs. Smith; it is Mrs. Conduit-Smith. Why, she even has it on her visiting card, with a syphon between."

MAUDE (who has just been kissed by George under a piece of mistletoe, which he has discovered hanging in the hall): "Oh, George, you wicked wretch, to take advantage of me like that. I wish I knew who hung it there. I'd—I'd pay them out, that's all!" GEORGE (to little brother later on in the evening): "Willie, I am going to take Maude away from you soon; will you mind?" WILLIE: "Not in the least, Mr. Popper; sis and I are not friends now." GEORGE: "How is that?" WILLIE (heedless of Maude's killing glances): "Oh, she boxed my ears for tipping her off the chair when she was nailing up that mistletoe in the hall."

MRS. F. was a happy mother, who had been blest with a half dozen boys, more or less, of whom she was justly very proud; but there was no daughter in the house. On one occasion, when the minister called to see her, he praised her thriving family, but added, "It's a pity, Mrs. F., that one of them wasn't a girl." Little Lute, one of the younger ones, sitting by in his little rocking-chair, looked up with a frown, and surprised the clergyman by saying, "I don't know who'd 'a' been her. Frank wouldn't 'a' been her, and George wouldn't 'a' been her, and I wouldn't 'a' been her, and I don't know who would 'a' been her."

THEY were dining off fowl in a restaurant. "You see," he explained, as he showed her the wishbone, "you take hold here, and I'll take hold here. Then we must both make a wish and pull, and when it breaks, the one who has the bigger part of it will have his or her wish gratified." "But I don't know what to wish for," she protested. "Oh, you can think of something," he said. "No, I can't," she replied; "I can't think of anything I want very much." "Well, I'll wish for you," he exclaimed. "Will you really?" she asked. "Yes," "Well, then, there's no use fooling with the old wishbone," she interrupted, with a glad smile, "you can have me."

HOSTESS: "Won't you please play something for us, dear Miss Smith?" MISS S.: "Oh, I can't, really, I'm so horribly out of practice." HOSTESS: "Oh, Miss Smith! When you always play so beautifully at any time!" MISS S.: "I! I play beautifully, when I really don't pretend to be anything more than an amateur! I only wish I could play." FIRST GUEST: "Do play, Miss Smith." SECOND GUEST: "Oh, do." THIRD GUEST: "Please do, Miss Smith. I've heard so much about your exquisite playing, and have always wanted to hear you." MISS S.: "Oh, thank you! But I really am quite out of practice, and I simply play a little for my own amusement." GUESTS (in chorus): "O-o-o-h, Miss Smith!" MISS S.: "Really, I don't pretend to play well." FOURTH GUEST: "Do, please, play something for us. Let me escort you to the piano." MISS S. (reluctantly): "Well, if I must, I must, I suppose; but I shall play horribly, and I really can't play a bit without my music." HOSTESS (to her husband an hour later): "We really must do or say something to get that stupid Miss Smith away from the piano. She's played six long pieces now and is beginning the seventh, and goodness only knows when she'll stop. Everybody's either yawning or giggling. I don't know whatever induced me to ask her to play."

SOCIETY.

THE Empress of Austria has expressed a wish that on her death she shall be interred on the wild coast of Corfu near the residence on which she has spent much time.

THERE are very extensive covers on the Royal estate, which usually yield about a thousand pheasants, and it is only during the Christmas holidays that any shooting takes place at Osborne.

THE Queen of Denmark, in her seventy-sixth year, is one of the finest harpists in the world. A thoroughly accomplished musician, she assists in trios of which the other two parts are taken by professionals of high standing.

AN examination of the papers of the late Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha shows that the Court Theatre, at Coburg had for a long time cost him upwards of three hundred thousand marks a year. The Duke's own operas were frequently performed, but did not largely attract the public. The Duke appeared two or three times on the stage of his theatre in one of Scribe's comedies.

THE Queen's largest and favourite yacht, the *Victoria and Albert*, has lately been docked at Portsmouth for a thorough overhaul and refit, and the furniture in her Majesty's private cabin is to be entirely renewed. The chintz is to be of exactly the same pattern as the last, which was originally designed by Prince Albert. A variety of improvements will be carried out in the various cabins of the yacht. The *Victoria and Albert* is to be quite ready for service by the end of January, when she will be required to convey the Empress Frederick from Flushing to Cowes; and a few days before Easter the yacht is to take the Queen from Portsmouth to Cherbourg on her way to Italy.

THERE is an interesting rumour to the effect that the Queen, whose general objection to second marriages is well known, has graciously waived her prejudice in favour of an early alliance between the Duchess of Albany and a very popular and wealthy nobleman, *persona gratissima* at Court, and a witty, genial, charming man—one of the very brightest and cleverest of the Peers, whose speeches, in and out of the House, are always polished, humorous and a reflex of his optimistic nature. The alliance would be very popular, and there is every reason to believe that it would also be a very happy one. It would not be surprising if the wedding were to take place about the month of primroses.

THE Queen has conferred the decoration of the Imperial Order of the Crown of India upon the Crown Princess of Roumania, Princess Victoria Melita of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and Princess Aribert of Anhalt. The order was instituted to commemorate her Majesty's assumption of the Imperial title of Empress of India. The two elder daughters of the Prince and Princess of Wales already have it, also Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein. The badge consists of the Imperial cypher V.R.I. in diamonds, pearls, and turquoise, set in a border of pearls, surmounted by the Imperial crown, enamelled and jewelled, and worn suspended from a bow of light blue watered ribbon. The order is for ladies only, and is in no way connected with the Order of the Star of India, or of the Indian Empire.

THE late King-Dowager of Portugal, who was a first cousin of the Queen and of Prince Albert, whose artistic and literary tastes he shared, devoted a considerable part of his time to collecting pictures and engravings. His gallery at Lisbon is one of the finest private collections in Europe. The King's French and German engravings, which were purchased with consummate knowledge, regardless of expense, are to be sold very soon at Cologne, and among them are many unique examples, including a hundred and fifty-six Hollars of the very highest quality. The King-Dowager was Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, the eldest son of Prince Ferdinand the elder (a brother of the late King of the Belgians and of the Duchess of Kent) by his marriage with the heiress of the Kohary family.

STATISTICS.

ELECTRICITY travels about 90,000 miles a second faster than light.

THERE are in the world two hundred and sixty one blind asylums and training schools, with 11,780 inmates.

It is shown by statistics that in Europe there are over 518,400 insane persons; in the United States, 168,900.

IN India twenty-five million acres are made fruitful by irrigation. In Egypt there are about six million acres, and in Europe about five million. The United States has about four million acres of irrigated lands.

GEMS.

THERE is no killing the suspicion that deceit has once begotten.

The most knowing man, in the course of the longest life, will always have much to learn, and the wisest and best much to improve.

CHARACTER is not cut in marble, it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BROWNED POTATOES.—Let potatoes boil until they are nearly done; half an hour before taking your meat roast from the oven put the potatoes in the dripping-pan with it, and baste them often with the meat gravy. Serve as soon as they are of a delicate brown.

BEEF TEA.—Remove all fat from a pound of juicy beef; chop it as fine as sausage meat, and pour over it a pint of cold water. Let it stand half an hour or more; then put it over a slow fire; when it has boiled five minutes strain and season with salt and a little pepper.

PUMPKIN PIE.—Pare the pumpkin and cook in but little water, so that when done it can be sifted quite dry. Add sugar to taste, one egg for each pie, and milk enough to make of required stiffness. A tablespoonful or two of cream to each pie is an improvement. Flavour with nutmeg, cinnamon, and a little ginger. Have ready a nice crust made light with a little baking powder. Bake well in deep perforated tin plates.

A GOOD salad is made as follows: Scald six large tomatoes, then set in cold water that the skin may rub off easily; soak a cucumber in cold salted water a while, slice them all with a sharp knife into the thinnest slices you can cut, toss together and cover with a dressing made of one tablespoonful of salad oil, three of vinegar, salt and pepper, or vinegar without oil if more convenient. Set in a cool place till served. It is nice with veal, lamb or fowl and quickly made.

SPONGE CAKE.—Your sponge cake has most likely been put into too quick an oven, and that makes it rise too quickly and sink again. I will give you a good recipe that seldom fails, for your recipe may not be a good sponge cake recipe:—Five eggs, the weight of four eggs in white sugar, and of three eggs in fine flour. Beat the five eggs and the sugar together with a whisk for twenty minutes, then stir in the flour gently with a spoon, and put it in a cake tin, and bake in a gentle oven till ready.

FILLETS NEPTUNE.—Have some fresh haddocks, soles, plaice, or other fish filleted, making sure that no bones are left in them. Soak the fillets for six hours in lemon juice and salt. Before cooking, dip them in raw beaten egg, and crumb them all over in fine bread crumbs mixed with a little finely grated lemon rind, a little curry powder, and some chopped parsley. Fry the fillets till brown and serve them hot in a hot dish, surrounded by mashed potatoes prepared with milk, butter, salt, and pepper to taste.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HORSES succumb to cold quicker than any other animal.

DROWNING was once a punishment for crime in Scotland.

IN Great Britain a city is technically a town which is or has been the seat of a bishop.

THE Chinese begin dinner with dessert and end with soup and fish.

THE Eiffel Tower is 8 inches shorter in winter than in summer.

THE use of the wedding-ring is first noted in Egypt, where the ring was the emblem of eternity.

THE Sultan of Turkey is a monomaniac on the subject of carriages, and has nearly 500 of all makes and kinds.

THE Queen will visit the Duke and Duchess of Coburg, at Coburg, when on her way home from Italy towards the end of April.

MOST of the inhabitants of Landes, France, walk constantly on stilts. This is because the soil is either marshy or sandy.

AN English machinist has discovered a new method of colouring iron. It entirely prevents rust, even though the metal be brought to a red heat.

THE albatross possesses great endurance. Authentic records show that one of them followed a ship for sixty-four days without once being seen to rest upon the water.

DURING the salmon-catching season in Arctic Alaska, the heads of the fish are cut off and put in a hole in the ground. When they are half putrefied, they are dug up and eaten, being esteemed a great delicacy.

A CELEBRATED French physician and bacteriologist has suggested that the use of a kind of medicated snuff, the formula for which he gives, as a preventive against influenza, and as a general disinfectant.

AMONG Vosges peasants children born at a new moon are supposed to have tongues better hung than others, while those born at the last quarter are supposed to have less tongue, but better reasoning powers. A daughter born during the waxing moon is always precocious.

A LOCOMOTIVE is being constructed in England to run one hundred miles an hour. It is 2,000-horse power, and the driving-wheels are twelve feet in diameter. The three cylinders are forty, twenty-eight, and eighteen inches in diameter, with a thirty inch stroke. The boiler pressure is two hundred pounds.

OLD Westminster Bridge was opened to the public in 1750. It was built by Labeledy, a Swiss, and was 1,223 feet long by 44 feet wide, and stood on 15 arches. Its erection, together with its approaches, cost the nation nearly £400,000; but it was built on so defective a principle, the piers having no solid foundation, that it cost a much larger sum to repair it within a period of 40 years. The present bridge, which was opened about 40 years ago, is built in harmony with the designs of the Houses of Parliament. The cost was over half a million.

PETER THE GREAT, who was more than six feet high, was very fond of dwarfs. When he set out on his travels, he had in his retinue four dwarfs, and the Princess Sophia Charlotte, wife of the Elector of Brandenburg, tells us that two of them were well proportioned and well bred, and adds that he sometimes kissed and sometimes pinched the ears of his favourite dwarfs. The most celebrated of Czar Peter's dwarfs was a little lady he called Poupée, who, when fully grown to womanhood, was only as tall as a child of five years old. This said Poupée was very pretty and clever, and the giant took the greatest pleasure in her company, and was never tired of amusing himself with the lively little creature. Dwarfs seldom live to an old age, but this tiny mite outlived her friend the Czar, and reached the age of a hundred years. She had never suffered from any illness and preserved all her faculties to the close of her long life.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. T.—Certificate must be produced.
M. C. D.—You will need a hawk's license.
RON.—Opinions never given on legal documents.
CECIL.—From London to Hong Kong is 9,780 miles.
MARITO.—The churchwardens would probably know.
CONSTANT READER.—Anyone can do so if he pleased.
STELLA.—Certain to injure voice if it is not checked.
BASIL.—A coin of George IV.'s reign has no special value.
ALICE.—Wire dishcloths are very helpful in washing ironware.
M. P.—Your sweetheart has placed the ring on the right finger.
R. G.—The question is not one of law at all, but of the society's rules.
JIM.—A chairman may move a resolution without leaving the chair.
PUZZLED ONE.—Probably you are mistaken regarding what you have read.
RUTHERFORD.—You are a weekly tenant and can only claim a week's notice.
NATALIE.—The handiest application, which is also a good one is cold water.
P. P.—It is the stamp in common use on the island at the present moment.
ALLAN ARNOLD.—It is utterly impossible to give an opinion upon case stated.
PETER PIPER.—You had better take legal advice. It is a very delicate matter.
SWEET WILLIAM.—Walsall is not usually considered part of the Black Country.
ALF.—You must obtain a music license for holding a concert at a public house.
ONE IN DISTRESS.—Consult the relieving officer if the child belongs to poor people.
AN OLD READER.—We are not aware literature of the kind you desire is obtainable.
L. X. M.—Her husband will no doubt get everything unless she provides for you in her will.
DOUGLAS ROY.—Take it to a dealer and ask him to make an offer. There is no fixed price.
DUDLEY WINTON.—Dudley (town) Stourbridge, and Old Swinford are each in Worcestershire.
SUSANNA JANE.—You would make much more rapid and satisfactory progress at an evening class.
JERUSA.—Sponge well and hang out to dry. To attempt more would probably injure the fabric.
SCOTSMAN.—Lord Bute is a member of the House of Lords, and has taken part in proceedings there.
IDA.—Your best chance is to take it to the cleaners. Without seeing the damages we cannot help you.
WORRIED MISTRESS.—Unless otherwise agreed to a month's notice must be given a domestic servant.
JONATHAN JAMES.—Your best course would be to place yourself in communication with the advertiser.
SUFFERER.—You should see a medical man in order that he may ascertain what really is wrong with you.
MOLLIE.—Try very strong sage tea, weak salt and water or rub the head with rose-water and glycerine.
B. H.—We should regard the case as a very serious one, and urge you without delay to call at the hospital.
MARY ANNE.—Half a lemon, dipped in salt, will clean copper and brass articles, and make them look like new.
A. W.—Question can be answered only by reference to the rules of some establishment we know nothing about.
CAROLINE EDITH.—To get a divorce you will have to prove both cruelty and adultery. Expense cannot be estimated.
INQUIRER.—It is utterly impossible to answer questions such as you send; they are beyond human knowledge.
HETTY.—Rub a little dripping into the meal before making your dough, and your cakes will be as "short" as you wish.
JESS.—Glycerine and lemon juice softens and whitens the skin. Mixed in equal proportions it is an excellent remedy for chapped hands.
FAITH.—When boiled they should be hung up in a cool place. During the boiling they should be covered with water the whole time.
MERCY.—Inflammation and redness of the eyes are frequently indications of constitutional disturbance, and you should consult a doctor.
A CONSTANT SUBSCRIBER.—The circumstances are sufficient to justify the police in opposing the man's application for renewal of his license.
MARTIN.—No license necessary to sell salmon or any other fish, nor for rabbits, but game dealer's license necessary for hares and winged game.
PERPLEXITY.—The word "petty" the juice of the pear—may be an English form of the French word *poire*, from *poire*, a pear, or of the Italian word *pera*.

GILBERT.—Subscription sales are not legal anywhere, but the authorities will not interfere with them so long as they are carried through for a charitable purpose.
ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—"Fully qualified" means holders of the certificate of the institute, which is obtainable only by passing several stiff examinations.
H. B. B. B.—Mr. Disraeli was Prime Minister while in the House of Commons. The Marquis of Salisbury was not Premier until after he had been in the House of Lords many years.
UNSOPHISTICATED.—The longest bridge in England used for vehicular traffic is, we think, Westminster Bridge, London, the total length of which is 1,160 feet; London Bridge is 1,005 feet.
LORETTE.—Dip a sponge or a bit of woollen cloth into the benzine, and rub the stain with the sponge or cloth; afterwards sponge with clean water, shake, and hang up to dry and evaporate the smell.
IN NEED OF ADVICE.—The perusal of historical books is always to be commended, but the mind is apt to grow weary of them, if there be not some other kind of reading to relieve it from time to time.
MINTUR.—Frequent and regular bathing of the scalp with cold water, to which a few drops of ammonia have been added, will afford temporary relief from dandruff. Each bathing should be followed by local friction.

"SO THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER."

Therewith the story ends again,
 And who is not contented?
 The Ogres all are duly slain,
 The Dragons circumvented.
 The Princess weds the hero bold
 Who came her chains to sever,
 And so the blissful pair, we're told,
 "Live happily for ever."

So—Finis! And the book we close,
 No other facts are granted,
 But lovers then, we must suppose,
 Were never disenchanted;
 For there was no domestic strife,
 No troubles intervening,
 But "happiness" and "married life"
 Were synonyms in meaning.

We, too, perhaps, although we dwell
 In different circumstances,
 Perform the drama fairly well
 Set forth in these romances;
 The Ogres' part a parent plays,
 The Maid's an heiress pretty,
 The Prince in these prosaic days
 Is "something in the City."

But will the parallel extend
 Through after life, I wonder,
 When grave philosophers perpend
 That marriage is a blunder?
 Ah, chroniclers discreetly mute!
 You were, perchance, too clever
 To hint at rifts within the lute
 Of happiness forever.

And yet * * * the view is out of date,
 By grave statistics shaken,
 But still to some, at any rate,
 It does not seem mistaken;
 For though the cynic's bitter mirth
 No truth in it discovers,
 Love now, as then, can make of earth
 A paradise for lovers.

ANTHONY C. DEANE.

L. R.—The distance between Newcastle (New South Wales) and Valparaiso is about 7,000 miles; but the length of time for a sailing-vessel to cover the distance would depend on its size and the state of the winds.
ANXIOUS ROSE.—The head-quarters of the 1st Life Guards are at Shorncliffe, and of the 2nd Life Guards at St. John's Wood, London; of the 17th Royal Lancers at Hounslow; and of the 5th Lancers at Canterbury.
TODDLER.—Use pearl ash and water to wash them out, let it steep for a time, add a few cinders to help the action of the liquid when you shake the decanter, if necessary add one or two spoonfuls of fresh slaked lime.
A TWELVE YEARS' READER.—Obviously the length of time a telegram will take to come from the States to this country must depend upon the length of the telegram. Signals pass between the two countries instantly.
BETHE.—Some will bear a good washing with a sponge and tepid soap and water, to be sponged at once with abundance of clean cold water, and hang to drip and dry. Poor qualities, however, will stand little or no cleaning.
T. B.—If the gilding is good, dust well and then go over it carefully with a camel's hair brush, dipped in warm spirits of wine. You can heat the spirits by letting the bottle stand in warm water, but unless the gilding was of good quality originally you can do nothing with it.
GIPSY.—Tepid water and weak lather of soap, using a sponge and working lightly, follow lightly with clean sponge and cold water and dry with soft linen cloth. It only needs a slight touch and care. Of course, if the lacquer is worn off or badly stained, nothing but relacquering will answer.

ERNESTINE.—More iron and less starch; that is the secret; or thinner starch with an extra taste of turpentine in it; there is no precise recipe; the chief thing is really more a matter of dexterity with the iron than anything else.
ALBERT.—The highest peak on the American Continent, it has just been definitely ascertained, is Mount Orizaba, Mexico, and not Mount St. Elias, Alaska. The latter is 18,015 feet above sea level, while Orizaba is 292 feet higher, or 18,314 feet.
PHILIP JONES.—We think you will act wisely in putting it in Government Consols through a post-office savings bank; in that way you will get about 3 per cent. with absolute safety; all these banks have printed information for guidance of small investors.
JOHN BROWN.—Chelsea Hospital was built in 1652, foundation being laid by Charles II.; first funds were got by deductions from soldiers' pay, but since 1783 has been almost entirely maintained by Government; it is for sick and maimed or "decayed" soldiers.
UNDECIDED.—It depends altogether on circumstances. If it is merely a communication from some regular correspondent, it is quite as well to wait until the guests have departed. If an immediate answer is required, the lady may excuse herself for the purpose.
YELLOW ONE.—If a sallow complexion is natural, of course there is nothing to be done except to take the best possible care of the health and keep the skin as clear as may be. If the sallowness arises from disease, a thoroughly competent physician should be consulted.
MIRABEL.—For pease brose put three tablespoonfuls of pease meal into a basin, add a pinch of salt and pepper, mix them, pour in gradually half a pint of boiling water, stirring it all the time with a wooden spoon. Pour the mixture into a pan and boil for five minutes.
JULIA.—Put half an ounce of hartshorn in a saucer dip a piece of clean flannel into it, and rub it on a piece of white curd soap; rub the boots with this, and as each piece of flannel becomes soiled, take a fresh piece. The boots, if the work be properly done, will look like new ones.
SOPHIA MAUD.—Sprinkle powdered camphor and strong ground white pepper, and hang it up in a dry but not hot press. Some people make a calico bag, inside of which it bangs in the press. It should be looked over, occasionally aired, and resprinkled with the powders.
NAP.—Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned Emperor of the French on December 2nd, 1804, and won the battle of Austerlitz, his greatest victory, December 2nd, 1805. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, president of the second French republic, was crowned as Napoleon III., Emperor of the French, December 2nd, 1852.
ANXIETY.—It is quite likely that you are suffering from one of the many forms of indigestion that are so prevalent. There may also be some nervous affection that causes bad circulation. If there are sufficient indications of heart trouble to cause uneasiness, by all means consult some specialist in heart troubles.
LORD GODFREY.—An esquire was originally a young gentleman in attendance upon a knight or noble; the title indicated one who was not himself in the front rank, but on his way to it; so, to-day, it is supposed to indicate a man in middle-class life, in easy circumstances, or above the rank of a working-man; frankly speaking, it is now used so indiscriminately as to have hardly any meaning.
VOX.—We are sorry we cannot help you in the way indicated in your letter. It would be extremely difficult for you to classify your own voice under anyone of the three heads you name, and think the best thing for you to do would be to consult a teacher of singing, and so ascertain correctly what your voice is capable of, that is if you are anxious to develop it fully. It is absolutely necessary to carefully train the voice if you wish to shine either in singing or elocution.
TROUBLED ETHEL.—In nine-tenths of the cases, the disfigurement known as black-heads arises from carelessness in washing the face. The surface is gone over hurriedly or in some way neglected, and the pores fill up with dust and perspiration. After these become large and deep it is very difficult to remove them without the aid of some triding operation. When they are small or just forming they can be taken out by a vigorous use of a soft brush and fine soap, after which the face should be rubbed over with rose-water and glycerine while still wet. As for pimples, they arise from various causes and for these the physician is the best adviser.

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